



THE INDEPENDENT

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America reveals her policy on global warming: too little, too late

President Bill Clinton finally revealed what the US was willing to do to combat man-made climate change – and it's not much. Europe, which wants to go further and faster, was deeply disappointed. *Inna Karacs in Bonn, Mary Dejevsky in Washington and Nicholas Schoon report.*

The United States is prepared to curb its fast-rising emissions of climate-shifting pollution, bringing them back down to their 1990 level by about 2010, President Clinton said in a long-awaited speech last night.

But that was far too little, too late, for Britain and the European Union. The feeling was that the world's only superpower, and its biggest global polluter, should be doing much more to slow the rises in temperatures and sea levels which threaten ruin, displacement and death for hundreds of millions of people in the next century.

"That is simply not good enough and it's not going to solve the problems of climate change," Peter Jorgensen, the European Commission spokesman, said last night.

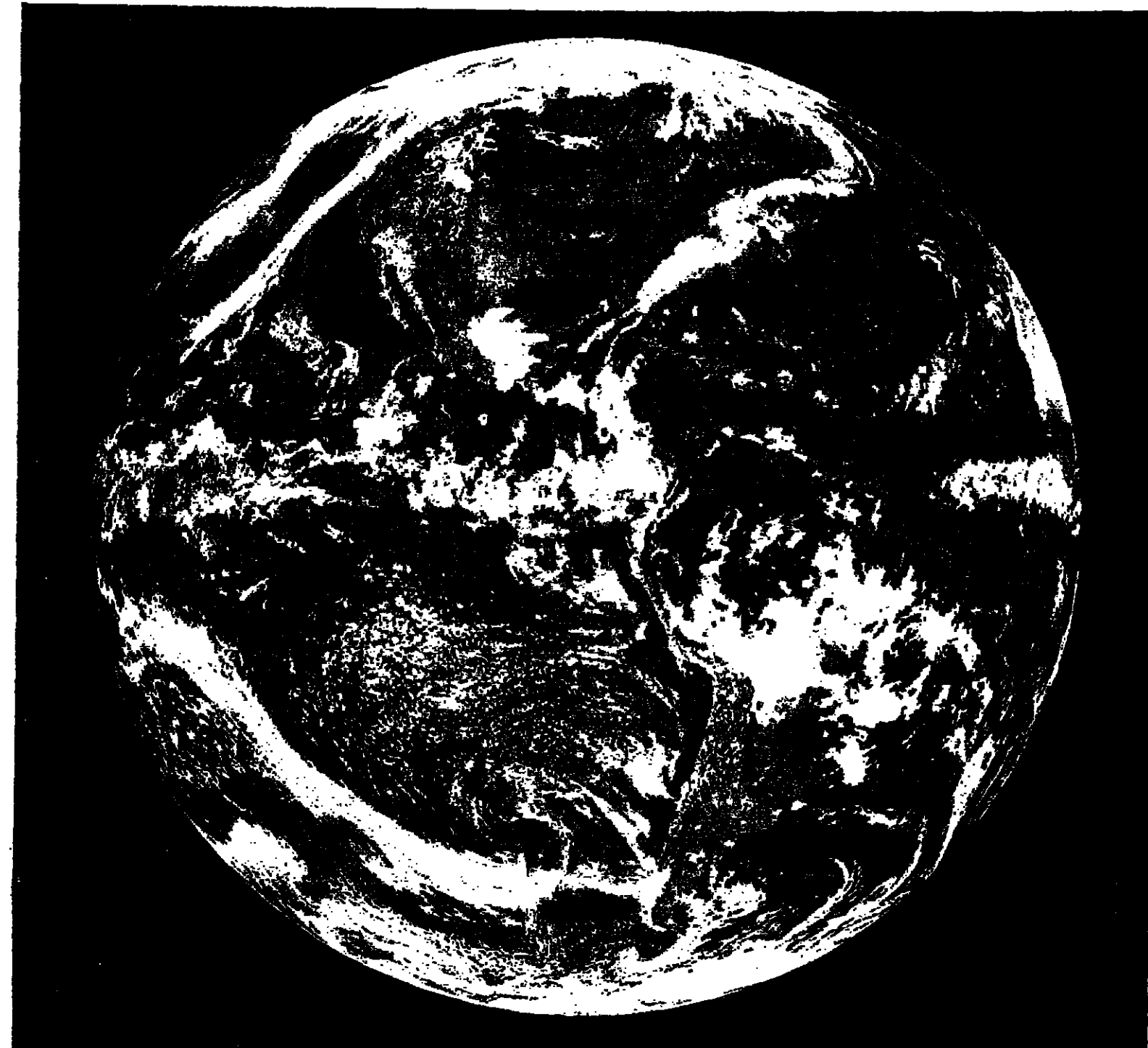
At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the US and all developed nations undertook to stabilise their "greenhouse gas" emissions at the 1990 level by 2000.

Very few have kept that promise, and the US position amounts to putting it back by a further decade.

Far from stabilising at the 1990 level by 2000, US emissions have in fact risen by 8 per cent, including 3.4 per cent in 1996 alone. With only one-twentieth of the Earth's population, America produces almost one-fifth of the world's pollution.

The US will go to a United Nations climate summit in Kyoto, Japan, in December, proposing that developed countries should together return their emissions to 1990 levels by between 2008 and 2012. President Clinton set out his proposals yesterday in a speech to the National Geographic Society, after months of wrangling within his administration.

He has also faced ferocious lobbying by major US industries



Dirty business: Europe feels the US, the only superpower, and biggest polluter, should do more to clean up its act Photograph: Science Photo Library

from oil giants to car manufacturers which rely heavily on coal, oil and gas, the burning of which produces carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, and strong opposition in the US Senate. In an attempt to placate critics, he outlined a £3bn package of incentives – mostly in the form of tax breaks – to encourage industry to save power or to switch to less polluting forms of energy.

The President made his announcement just in time to keep his promise to make the American position known in advance of the last set of preparatory negotiations before the Kyoto climate conference. Those talks started in Bonn this week. He telephoned several prime ministers and presidents earlier this week, including Tony Blair.

The Clinton proposal leaves the US and the European Union, the two biggest players

in the climate talks, poles apart and with little time to stitch a compromise. The EU is calling for emission cuts of 15 per cent for developed countries by 2010. Japan is in the middle, advocating a 5 per cent cut.

None of these reductions would actually stop the climate changing. The immediate issue is what rate of change can be tolerated without severe threats to lives and economies.

The EU is roughly on target

to meet the earlier commitment to stabilise emissions by 2000. While most member states have actually seen emissions rise, big cuts in Germany and Britain – more the result of accident than design – have offset these.

Britain shut down the bulk of its coal industry; coal produces far more carbon dioxide than the natural gas which replaces it. Germany closed much of the highly inefficient, fossil-

fuel-intensive industry in the East.

At one end of the spectrum, the Alliance of Small Island States, some of whose members will be largely submerged by rising sea levels in the next century, is pushing for a 20 per cent cut in carbon dioxide emissions by 2005. At the other end, Australia – whose industries are particularly reliant on fossil fuels – refuses to contemplate any curbs.

The Government looks set to back off plans to change the status of Church schools because bishops may frustrate legislation in the House of Lords. Page 10

Post won't be privatised

The Post Office will remain fully in public ownership in spite of recent speculation that the Government was planning to sell off 49 per cent of the corporation, raising up to £2.5bn. Page 4

Violence in the home

Four out of five children fear their parents' rows leading to physical violence, according to a study whose publication co-incided with a Government statement that domestic violence is "vastly under-estimated". Page 5

SEEN & HEARD

The meat-free camera sounds about as necessary as the fat-free television or protein-enriched bus, doesn't it? But the Vegetarian Society yesterday gave its approval to a Japanese digital camera certified free of animal ingredients "in any of its component parts". Traditional film contains gelatine, derived from animal bones and skin. Digital cameras don't use film – images are captured on a computer chip. So the £300 Ricoh RDC-300 really is vegetarian-friendly – like any digital camera, actually.

On its birthday too! (The world is 6,000 today)

The dome is still a building site, the lottery budget is unspent and the millennium bug is still pupating in our PCs, but the new millennium is upon us. The world is precisely 6,000 years old today. "In the beginning God created the Heavens and Earth, which beginning of time was in that night preceding the XXIII day of October ... in the year 4004 before the first of our Era, commonly called Christian."

Those authoritative words were written by James Ussher (pictured below), Anglican Archbishop of Armagh, in his *Annals of the Old Testament* published in 1650. To this day, no one has given a more precise date for the beginning of the world, which may explain why Ussher's date of 4004 BC was printed in every King James Bible until Victorian times.



That date was the fruit of the best learning of the 17th century. Ussher had studied all the Greek and Hebrew sources known at the time. He compared historical, biblical and astronomical records, as far back as Nebuchadnezzar; for still earlier times, he relied on the Hebrew bible. But counting backwards is not as easy as it

looks. Egyptians, Babylonians, Jews, and Romans all used years of different length, starting at different seasons. The Latin way of counting confused things further. Not only was there no year AD zero, but when Julius Caesar introduced his calendar in the Roman Empire the officials thought a leap year "every fourth year" meant every three years.

Ussher relied on the numbering system of the Frenchman Joseph Scaliger to sort out "these pernicious difficulties". Unfortunately, France was already using the Gregorian calendar, while Britain deferred entry into the single European calendar and kept to the old Julian system. Despite this, once the year 4004 is known, the precise date of 23 October follows at once. God, of course, kept to the Jewish festival calendar (He had commanded it, after all) and the first day of the Feast of Weeks, calculated from the Equinox and the Moon in 4004 BC, was on Sunday 23 October.

James Ussher was a devoted millenarian. His calculations showed that Solomon completed his Temple 3000 years after the Creation; and he thought that Jesus was born in 4 BC. The 5000-year mark was when the Antichrist began his rule, corrupting the Popes. Sadly, Ussher made no predictions for what should happen today, at the start of the seventh millennium. Cosmology has taken over from Bible study for purposes of dating the world.

So, give or take a couple of solar quirks, let's Ussher in the millennium. Happy Birthday World – You're 6,000 today.

— Henry Braun

INSIDE TODAY

23/OPINION

Polly Toynbee makes the case against Islam.

Rupert Cornwell says fat is a serious issue.

And John Walsh revels in the literary life at Cheltenham's festival.

EDUCATION+ Is the vice-chancellors' club breaking up?

TODAY'S OTHER NEWS

Cosmetic animal tests opposed by Blakemore

Colin Blakemore, the scientist viewed by many anti-vivisectionists as "enemy number one", believes most experiments on animals to test cosmetics should be banned. Professor Blakemore has told *The Independent* that killing animals to test new beauty products is indefensible. He called for an immediate end to animal experiments that are used to check the safety of finished cosmetic products.

The head of physiology at Oxford University and president of the British Association for the Advancement of Science has been an outspoken supporter of animal research. But he said yesterday: "Britain has led the world in this moral issue. I think the banning of finished cosmetic products would be a step in the right direction." He added: "I find it difficult to see how the benefit of beautification outweighs the cost of killing animals and potential animal suffering." His comments follow the disclosure in *The Independent* on Tuesday that the Government has broken its pre-election pledge to end the use of animals to test cosmetics, and that the research budget for non-animal alternatives has been cut. Professor Blakemore revealed in 1972 he had sewn up kittens' eyes as part of a research project; his view that most cosmetic tests are unnecessary will increase pressure to change the law. He said he still supported the use of animals to test products such as sun-screen if they had the potential to save life. About 2,800 animals a year die in cosmetic tests compared to about 2.7 million in medical research. Interview, page 3

Church schools retreat

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WEATHER The Eye, page 10
TELEVISION The Eye, page 12
CROSSWORDS Page 32 and
the Eye, page 9

COLUMN ONE

Scientists say rats to the evolution of love

You may have thought that evolution had it all pegged out, but then along comes another slew of research that puts the sexual world right out of kilter.

In theory, men produce millions of sperm which can fertilise lots of eggs, so they will naturally try to be unfaithful swine, seeking to father children everywhere; whereas women produce just one egg a month and so will seek a faithful partner who will support their mutual child. The antagonism between the two objectives means men want out of marriage, right?

Wrong, according to a survey of the nation's marriages published yesterday. About half of the respondents felt that having children was an important factor for a successful marriage – but 60 per cent of men thought that children were an asset, compared to just 50 per cent of women. Evolutionary biologists will shake their heads, and query whether the men thought the children were the sort of asset you could trade on the stock market – for a flash car, perhaps.

It gets worse. It turns out that it is women who want to be out of these marriages, not men. BBC Family Life magazine asked 282 couples if, given the chance to relive their lives and that nervous moment at the altar again, they would marry the same partner. Of the men questioned, 71



per cent said "yes"; as against only 56 per cent of the women. Overall, 10 per cent said they definitely wouldn't do the same again. Given that divorces are running at about four times that level, there must be some polished liars out there – a possibility that opinion polls should allow for.

However, laboratory rats don't lie. They stirred up what seemed like a tidy world yesterday, when the science journal *Nature* published a report showing that sex alters the physical makeup of your brain. At least, that is, if you're a male rat.

At the University of California, Marc Breedlove gave male rats female cage-mates, some of which were receptive to the males because they were given the hormone oestrogen, and others which were unresponsive because of a lack of oestrogen. After a month, Dr Breedlove (who, arguably, has a little too much time on his hands) looked at the male rat brains. In rats that had been placed with sexually receptive females, the cells in a hormone-sensitive part of the brain were actually smaller than in rats that had no sexual experience. "It is possible that differences in sexual behaviour cause, rather than are caused by, differences in brain structure," Dr Breedlove commented.

And what does that tell us of the war between the sexes? Well, referring back to the BBC survey, which found that a good love life came only third in the "most important" list of things (at 72 per cent, after "compromise" and "good sense of humour") it is obvious what is going on. British men just don't want their brains messed about with. And if that means upsetting everything that evolution tells us, so be it.

— Charles Arthur and Amanda Kelly

CONTENTS

| | | | |
|-----------------|----|-------------------|----------------|
| Leading stories | 3 | Middle East | 16 |
| Politics | 4 | Rewriting history | 17 |
| Family violence | 5 | World news | 18 |
| News | 6 | Architecture | 19 |
| Islam | 7 | Features | 20 |
| News | 8 | Obituaries | 21 |
| Balmoral | 9 | Leaders, letters | 22 |
| Education news | 10 | Comment | 23 |
| Yemen kidnap | 11 | Business | 24-28 |
| News | 12 | Sport | 29-31 |
| Health news | 13 | Crossword | The Eye, 9 |
| Regionalism | 14 | Weather | The Eye, 10 |
| Working life | 15 | TV & Radio | The Eye, 11-12 |

PEOPLE



Media mother joins battle with Saatchi's giant

Christine Walker, a woman unknown to most of the public but who is acknowledged as the most powerful woman in British advertising, is to fight a court battle with her former employers so she can set up her own company after having a baby.

Ms Walker, 44, was chief executive of Zenith Media, the part of the Saatchi and Saatchi empire now called Cordiant, which bought and placed advertising worth in excess of £500m, more than double that of its nearest rivals. The size of her buying power put her on first-name terms with the media's main power brokers, including Rupert Murdoch, Michael Green of Carlton Television and David Montgomery of Mirror Group.

She left Zenith in January to have a baby, after nearly 10 years with the company, and was prevented by her £399,000-a-year contract from working in the industry until this Saturday. Zenith is taking her to court because of rumours that she is to set up a joint-venture media-buying company with Lord Saatchi.

Lord Saatchi, formerly Maurice Saatchi, who was emboldened by John Major, left the agency he founded after a boardroom battle three years ago. Zenith wants to enforce clauses in Ms Walker's contract which prevent her from poaching Zenith staff or

clients for a further 12 months. An injunction has been granted for 14 days enforcing the non-approach clauses despite Ms Walker arguing that Zenith breached the contract in August and it is no longer enforceable. The agency is likely to have a battle on its hands. Ms Walker was considered a formidable negotiator by the TV stations and newspapers who negotiated multi-million pound advertising contracts with her. She was immortalised as the stereotypical hard-driven businesswoman who lives for her work in the 1994 book *The Executive Tart and Other Myths*.

Saatchi and Saatchi has made previous legal attempts to prevent its top executives, including Jeremy Sinclair, the man who created the "Labour isn't working" campaign for the Conservative Party in 1979, from joining its founding partners.

Lord Saatchi set up a new agency in 1995, M&C Saatchi, with his brother Charles. Now both Saatchi agencies are bitter rivals. The conflict stems from the ability of key executives to form strong relationships with advertisers who will move millions of pounds worth of business to wherever the executive works. Companies like British Airways moved their accounts with the brothers when they left Saatchi and Saatchi.

— Paul McCann

From catwalk to classes for Gladstone's girl

Olivia Inge would have brought a smile of approval to the face of her great grandfather, the Victorian prime minister William Gladstone, when she spurned a job on the catwalk in favour of her studies.

The 17-year-old schoolgirl (right) turned down a £10,000-a-day offer from top French model agency Metropolitain so that she could finish her exams.

Yesterday, after a two-week stint in Paris working for fashion houses Yves St Laurent and 'Comme des Garçons alongside top models, including Naomi Campbell, Olivia was back in the classrooms of the Wells Cathedral School in Somerset.

"Paris was absolutely fantastic but now I want to concentrate on getting my A-levels," she said. "It is going to be difficult putting it



all behind me for the time being because it was a different world. But I hope to be able to come back to earth very quickly. I know how important it is for me to pass these exams."

But Olivia, who is studying English, French and Theatre Studies, has not ruled out a career in front of the camera and still does the odd bit of work for London-based agency Models 1.

— Amanda Kelly

Mark strips off last shred of modesty

Mark Wahlberg has made a footnote in movie history, although foot is perhaps not the most appropriate word.

The actor and former model, known as Marky Mark, will become the first to have a full-frontal shot in a Hollywood movie, *Boogie Nights*, which will receive its UK premiere in London in the new year.

In America, the film had a rating which means under-17s must be accompanied by adults. A satire on the porn industry, it follows British comedy success *The Full Monty* which climaxed with rear views of its protagonists.

Male nudity is rare in films, and, until now, unknown in Hollywood: *The Crying Game* had as its pivotal moment a shot of male genitalia. Erections are, however, not allowed in mainstream movies on either side of the Atlantic.

— David Lister

UPDATE

INTERNET

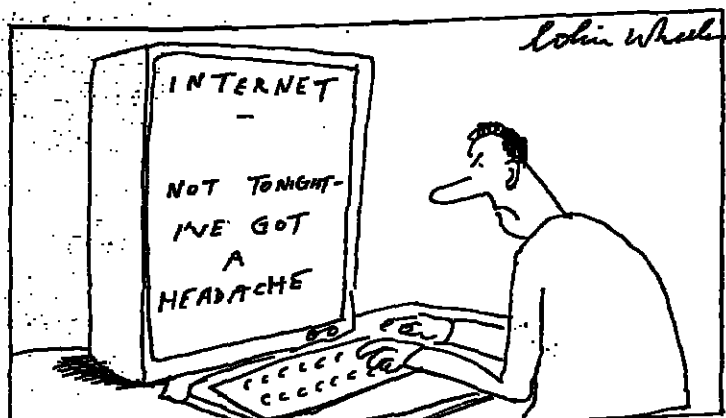
Lots of sex please, we're surfers

It's official. The vast majority of "net surfers" are after one thing, and one thing only. Sex. Every two seconds, in fact.

Or so says a survey conducted by a new consumer guide to the Internet which analysed the top 200 search words entered by users over one month to find out the most commonly requested topics. The result? The Internet was swamped by 1,553,420 requests for "sex" and 414,320 applications for "chat" (not as innocuous a request as it may first appear). "XXX" was at number three in the chart, with 397,640 requests, followed by "Playboy" with 390,920. Other top-ten contenders included "nude" and "porno", both with more than a quarter of a million fans. Many users displayed considerable ingenuity in their search for sexual enlightenment, with guest appearances by "Persian kitty", "hardcore" and "cyberporn".

But this trend is unlikely to last, claims Mike Cowley of The Web. "Take my word for it," he said, "shopping will be far more popular than sex on the Internet by the year 2000."

— Louise Hancock



MEDICINE

Chillies burn a way to pain relief

It could mean new treatments for chronic pain; or it might just offer a treatment for people who find chilli-ridden Mexican food too hot to handle. Scientists in America have discovered the chemical messenger in the body which signals painful heat, including that caused by chilli peppers.

David Julius and Michael Caterina, of the University of California in San Francisco, worked with capsaicin, the pungent ingredient in chilli peppers, and found that a chemical called vanilloid receptor subtype 1 (VR1) is activated when it binds to capsaicin. The work, published today in the science journal *Nature*, reveals that painful temperatures work in a similar way and cause the same sensation of burning heat that chillies bring on in the mouth. The result could help us to understand what causes pain sensations, and in time to understand how we become tolerant to them.

— Charles Arthur

CLOTHES

Woolly jumpers to lose their itch

Scientists have found an answer to itchy woollen jumpers – a fibre that can make scratchy material "feel like cashmere", it was revealed today.

Kurabo Industries, a Japanese clothing manufacturer, has developed a way of stretching and thinning individual fibres to take out the tickle. The fibres are treated chemically to expose more of their inner parts, which do not irritate the skin. *New Scientist* magazine reported: "The resulting wool is not only less itchy, but also lighter. It feels like cashmere." Kurabo will use the new material, Corriellana, to make extra-light clothes.

TOURIST RATES

| | | | |
|----------------------|--------|------------------------|---------|
| Australia (dollars) | 2.21 | Italy (lira) | 2.777 |
| Austria (schillings) | 19.91 | Japan (yen) | 194.59 |
| Belgium (francs) | 58.44 | Malta (lira) | 0.62 |
| Canada (\$) | 2.21 | Netherlands (guilders) | 3.19 |
| Cyprus (pounds) | 0.83 | Norway (kroner) | 11.52 |
| Denmark (kroner) | 10.85 | Portugal (escudos) | 286.65 |
| France (francs) | 9.49 | Spain (pesetas) | 238.02 |
| Germany (marks) | 2.84 | Sweden (kroner) | 12.28 |
| Greece (drachme) | 446.44 | Switzerland (francs) | 2.37 |
| Hong Kong (\$) | 12.25 | Turkey (lira) | 382.755 |
| Ireland (punts) | 1.08 | United States (\$) | 1.59 |

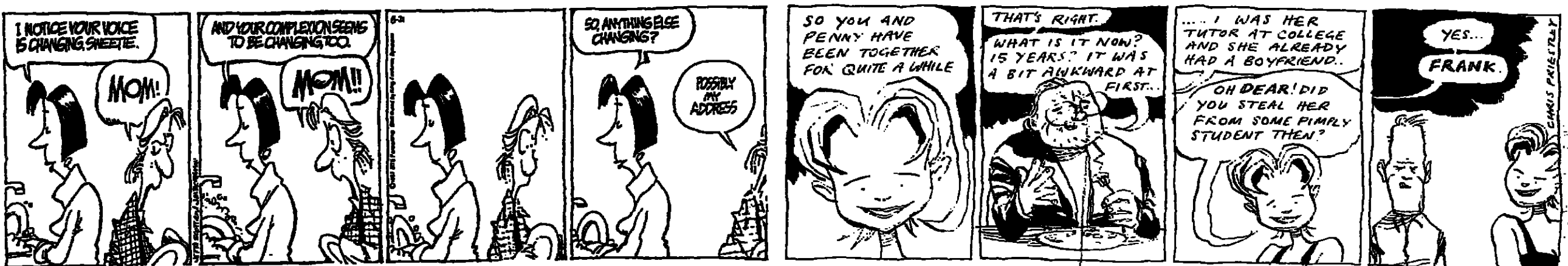
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The ultimate accessory: Pupils with their mobile phones. Some schools have taken to banning the phones from classrooms Photograph: Rui Xavier

The mobile phone: a must for clued-up Nineties pupils

Once the quiet of the classroom was likely to be interrupted only by scraping chairs, or sniggering from the back. These days it is more likely to be the ring of a mobile phone. Jojo Moyes takes up the call.

pressed to an ear. Similarly, a recent Gallup poll commissioned by Motorola found that young people use pagers as a means of "socialising and flirting". They are also a fashion statement.

The news that mobile telephones have been banned from another school will come as no surprise to teachers frustrated by the constant bleep and ring of communications devices.

The ban at George Watson's College in Edinburgh, follows similar bans at schools such as Millfield in Somerset and Holly Hall in Dudley, West Midlands, and was introduced after a pupil's phone rang during lessons. Now errant pupils will have their mobile phones

confiscated until the end of the day, and then be told not to take them back into classes. Andrew Cubie, chairman of the school's board of governors, said that it was thought better to take action before the ringing of mobile phones became a "real problem".

According to Sue Berryman, a mother-of-four from north London who works in the education sector, phone use is now the norm in her children's schools, with pupils using them largely to call their friends before and after class.

"What they seem to be doing is no different to what kids have done for ever: not taking a great deal of interest in lessons — through no fault of the teach-

ers — and displaying much more interest in where they're going at lunchtime, and who with. Also, in a mixed comprehensive in particular there's the constant anxiety that the boyfriend or girlfriend might be talking to someone else," she said.

A lot of the children also had pagers — an option popular with parents due to low, or non-existent running costs, although less so among the teenagers.

Many children, considering phone usage "a priority", do part-time work to pay for them. But Mrs Berryman was forced to put a ban on the calls after receiving a bill for £200. "I've had to get a grip on it. I got an itemised phone bill. They're ever so keen on phones that

have free weekend calls. But if they call them from home the cost is astronomical. It's a whole extra disciplinary area."

That said, many parents feel it is worth paying for the phones just to ensure that their offspring have a way of keeping in touch.

Mr Cubie observed: "The culture of life is different to when you or I were at school. Parents now give these phones to children for safety to go to and come from school."

But the growth in the classroom communications market is not one that most other mobile phone providers seem particularly comfortable discussing. Mercury One-to-One said that marketing to teenagers was "ethically difficult".

Nanny's mother tells trial of happy daughter

The big-gun medical experts keep on testifying in the Louise Woodward trial and the prosecution's case against her is looking ever more frayed. Yesterday, though, the court heard from one of the more important character witnesses in the case, Susan Woodward, the defendant's mother. David Lishman was there.

Pressed by the prosecution to describe Matthew Eappen, the small boy whom her own daughter, Louise Woodward, is alleged to have brutally murdered on 4 February, Susan Woodward found herself fighting back tears yesterday. In a broken voice, she replied simply: "He was a beautiful child".

Brought by the defence as a character witness, Mrs Woodward recounted for the jury a visit she paid to the Eappen family between Boxing Day and New Year's Day last year.

She confirmed that during that week, she also had cared for the then 8-month-old Matthew, taken him for strolls and "rocked him to sleep".

Otherwise, it was mostly maternal emotion on display on the stand, as Mrs Woodward beamed encouraging smiles across the courtroom at her daughter, who stands accused of violently shaking Matthew and slamming his head against a hard surface in a manner sufficient to have caused his death on 9 February.

Louise, who has maintained a mostly blank, if attentive, demeanour throughout her trial, returned her own tentative smiles towards the stand.

Mrs Woodward, who, as a witness, has been barred from seeing her daughter for the duration of the trial, also painted a picture of Louise enjoying her experience with the Eappens which began after she transferred from another family in the area on 18 November last year.

When she arrived for her visit on 26 December she found Louise was "doing very well, she was very happy", Mrs Woodward testified.

Meanwhile, yet another renowned medical expert came to the stand yesterday to

back up the defence's contention that Matthew in fact had suffered an earlier brain injury that had created a blood clot on the brain that began catastrophically to re-bleed on or just before 4 February.

Dr Ayub Ommaya, a specialist in neurosurgery and bio-mechanics, testified that the re-bleeding caused a sudden and exponentially accelerating build-up of pressure inside Matthew's head. That pressure, he said, eventually bore down on his brain stem, which is at the base of the brain, and disabled it. The stem, he said, is "like the plug of your TV. If you pull it out, everything stops".

Importantly, Dr Ommaya agreed with the defence lawyer Barry Scheck that symptoms displayed by Matthew in the hours before his collapse — unusual lethargy, loss of appetite and constipation — matched those of talk-deteriorate-and-die patients. "Those were precisely the symptoms we would expect".

With the case expected to be given to the jury next Tuesday, the defence will need to decide shortly whether the jurors should be asked to consider a range of convictions, ranging from first-degree murder down to involuntary manslaughter or whether to take a gamble known among lawyers in Massachusetts as the "noose or loose" option.

Under this scenario, the defence would ask that the jurors be given only the straight choice between guilty as charged on first-degree murder or innocence and therefore acquittal.

Much may still hang on the appearance on the stand that is still scheduled of the defendant herself, which could come today or on Monday. (There will be no session tomorrow.)

But such has been the mood of confidence on the defence bench in recent days, the temptation will be strong for the straight, noose or loose, choice.

Animal rights groups' hate figure changes tack on testing cosmetics

One of the leading exponents of animal experiments has changed his mind on the question of cosmetic testing. The shift, writes Jason Bennett, will add pressure on the Government to introduce a ban.



Blakemore: 'insufficient justification for cosmetics tests'

For the past 10 years Professor Colin Blakemore has been a hate figure among animal rights groups.

The Oxford University scientist has had windows smashed and his three children threatened with kidnapping; in 1993 a bomb packed with needles was sent to his home; and in August paint stripper was poured over his car. At one stage he had 400 campaigners demonstrating outside his house.

Now one of Britain's most vocal supporters of vivisection is in danger of becoming a champion of animal rights.

He told *The Independent* yesterday that he supports a ban on most testing of cosmetics on animals. He wants companies to immediately end animal testing on all beauty products.

Professor Blakemore, 53, be-

came animal activists' main target in 1972 when he revealed he had sewn up kittens' eyes under anaesthetic. The research helped medical understanding of amblyopia, the commonest form of child blindness.

Professor Blakemore said yesterday: "The public and the

don't significantly improve existing products.

"For beauty aids, such as blushers, lipstick and mascara, I find it difficult to see how sufficient benefit can be made to justify the death of animals."

"Cosmetic manufacturers should be telling us why it's necessary. No one is killing animals for fun."

Professor Blakemore will appear on Channel 5's *What's the Story?* on Sunday at 7pm to discuss why he supports an end to testing of beauty products.

He believes products such as sun screen, which could save life, should be re-classified as medicines so that animal testing can continue.

About 2,800 animals die each year on cosmetic tests compared to 2.7 million for medical research.

Calls for a ban of cosmetic testing are also supported by Anita Roddick, founder of The Body Shop, who has written to Tony Blair to express her anger at the government U-turn.

The number of laboratory animals killed each year could be up to 400,000 more than the official figure because they ignore animals used in test tube experiments, according to Animal Aid, the British anti-vivisection group, in a report in *New Scientist* magazine.

Government have to decide whether there's merit in developing new products — whether having a new anti-dandruff shampoo is such a benefit that it outweighs the death of some rabbits.

"There should not just be more look-alike products that

Fashion

Paul Smith

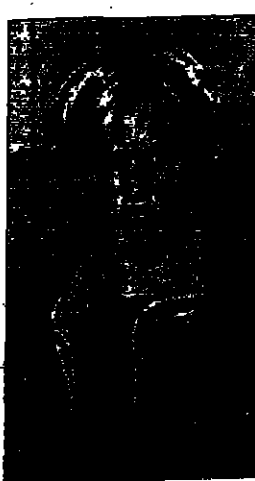
Vivienne Westwood

Jasper Conran

John Galiano

Tomorrow at 9.00pm on 5

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT



THE EYE

After 'Shallow Grave' and 'Trainspotting', Messrs Boyle, MacDonald and Hodge have decided to go west. Well, it's 'A Life Less Ordinary', says Adam Mars-Jones

PLUS interviews with Julia Ormond, Gavin Rossdale (the pretty boy from Bush) and Bernard D'Ascoli (the blind pianist from Paris)

What children really fear: their parents fighting

More than four out of five of our children are worried about domestic violence, a new report claims. The Government says it will impose a "zero tolerance" strategy on violence in the home. **Glenda Cooper, Social Affairs Correspondent, looks at families living in the so-called "age of anxiety".**

The level of domestic violence in Britain has been "vastly underestimated", Harriet Harman, the Minister for Women, said yesterday. She pledged concerted Government action to tackle the issue after a report found that a large percentage of children feared violence in the home and school.

The research carried out for NCH Action for Children surveyed 1,000 parents and 250 children about family life. Their findings concluded that childhood today is not a carefree time, with 82 per cent of children worried about violence in the home.

Ms Harman told a seminar held by the charity that "violence by men against their wife or partner is one of the most se-

rious problems facing society today".

She continued: "Domestic violence is no respecter of class or background - it affects women of all walks of life, rich and poor, black and white, young and old, in all areas of the country."

Domestic violence was the single most common form against women, she said. In 1995, 43 per cent of all assaults against women were committed by their partners.

"The scale of the problem has been vastly underestimated, because only 25 per cent of domestic violence is reported."

"Seventy-nine per cent of the parents surveyed in this report agreed with the statement that a lot of violence that goes on within families is kept secret, so those families don't get the help they need."

Ms Harman said she wanted the Government to help bring about a change in public attitude towards domestic violence, in the same way that a Government campaign in the 1980s brought about a radical change in public feeling about drink-driving.

There should be "zero tolerance" of the problem, she said, adding: "We have to say very clearly that no violence in the home is acceptable, just as violence outside the home is a



Family at war: Kathy Burke and Ray Winston who star in the film *Nil By Mouth*, directed by Gary Oldman, which depicts violence in the home

criminal offence.

The report found that children were also concerned about drug and alcohol abuse, and a lack of jobs for young people (three in four were worried about jobs). A similar number

were worried about poverty and homelessness, and between half and two thirds express fears about lack of facilities for children and poor standards in schools - "the latter probably showing that most children are

only too aware of the competition for academic success and, ultimately, jobs lying ahead of them," the report says.

"Clearly life is becoming more insecure, in part because the rate of societal change is ac-

celerating, especially in terms of the world of work. But something else is happening alongside this to compound the sense of insecurity, namely the unravelling of many of the safety nets which people fall back on

in times of trouble," it says.

Cutbacks in the benefit system, a health service under pressure and uncertainty about care in old age have all contributed to this sense of unease. With the most important sup-

port system for most now being the family, the increasing scale of family breakdown means the support system can be seen as a "rather fragile bulwark".

The charity calls for action. "We might argue that it is sad if parents and children are worried, but that is simply a product of the turbulent times we live in. But there are strong reasons for rejecting this approach because concerns of these kinds undermine the confidence of both children and parents, and make it less likely that they will be able to take advantage of educational and other opportunities. They make underachievement a self-fulfilling prophecy."

Tackling family violence should be a priority, including putting women's refuges on a more secure financial footing, establishing confidential services across the country for children and other family victims of abuse and incorporating domestic violence awareness training into training for doctors, social workers the police teachers and youth workers.

It also recommends that more emphasis should be put on combating bullying at school, targeting young people most vulnerable to youth unemployment and building up support structures for families and communities.

And it may be pregnant women who suffer most

Concern is growing that pregnancy is often the trigger for violent attacks on women by their husbands or partners. **Ian Burrell explains that 1,000 pregnant women are to be questioned in the first publicly-funded investigation of the problem in Britain.**

"He just hit me too hard this once," murmured a pregnant woman to a nurse in the south London ante-natal clinic.

Although her jaw was broken in three places, she was not seeking medical attention, only a certificate to get time off work. Nurses later found she had been beaten regularly by her boyfriend while carrying their child, but felt he had done

nothing wrong.

Midwives have now been asked to help assess how many violent attacks on women by their partners are because the woman is pregnant. A report will be submitted to the Department of Health and new guidelines are likely to be drawn up for nurses and midwives to identify women at risk.

Research in America and Scandinavia has found that 17 per cent of women experience domestic violence in the first three months of their pregnancy, and blows are often targeted at the breasts or abdomen.

Nicola Harwin, of the Women's Aid Federation, said: "Part of the romantic ideal in our society is that jealousy and possessiveness are flattering. But that's how the violent relationship often starts off," she said. "Then, when the child is conceived, it is seen as a threat."

She said pregnant women were sometimes attacked by

their partners because they were not sexually available.

The new British research will be headed by Dr Gill Mezey, a consultant in Forensic Psychiatry at St George's Hospital Medical School in London, and Dr Susan Bewley, director of obstetrics at Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Trust, south London.

Dr Bewley said there were concerns that new measures designed to encourage husbands and boyfriends to be present at childbirth and during pregnancy care were making it more difficult for pregnant women to report domestic violence.

She said: "As a society we are encouraging greater involvement of men in childcare, but for some vulnerable women this may not be a good thing."

Dr Bewley said there were signs from overseas studies that unplanned pregnancies were most likely to trigger violence.

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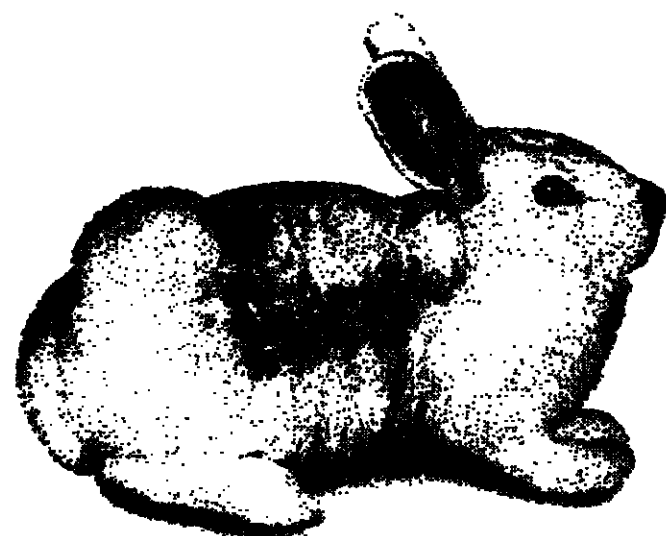
Beauty can be an ugly business. About 30,000 animals are still being killed in Europe each year in cosmetic testing.

In allergy skin tests, the fur is shaved from the backs of guinea pigs and the test chemical is applied. Often, in such a concentrated form that it can burn right through the skin.

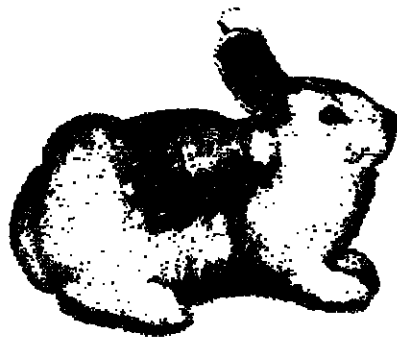
The tests drag on for at least 7 days before these poor, mutilated 'stimulus-response models' are put out of their misery.

Meanwhile, just to make sure a new shampoo, or shower gel doesn't sting, it is squirted into the eyes of animals. Rabbits are preferred because they cannot produce enough tears to wash away the irritants. Their large eyes also make it easier to observe the chemical ulceration of the eyeballs.

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Mother tells of tragedy in wake of baby's death

The mother of a baby girl who died during a hole-in-the-heart operation broke down in tears yesterday as she described how her partner took his life in the wake of the child's death, and she considered "joining them".

Helen Rickard was giving evidence against three doctors from the Bristol Royal Infirmary who are charged with serious professional misconduct following the deaths of 29 children over a number of years.

Ms Rickard said her partner Andy placed a bin-liner over his head and suffocated a few days before the second anniversary of baby Samantha's death.

She said: "Andy never got over Samantha's death. He kept having nightmares where he saw her calling him from the dark saying, 'Where are you? I can't find you'. They had a very strong bond between them. After Samantha's death, Andy became very introspective, spending time at Samantha's grave. Even though we had a second baby, Ben, he could never accept Samantha not being there."

Ms Rickard said her partner had died listening to a Chris De Burgh recording that they had

played driving home from the hospital after Samantha's death.

She added: "I very seriously thought about joining them but where would that leave Ben, who's four and a half now. You pick up the pieces and carry on. Ben says his sister and father are in heaven, but sometimes he asks when his daddy will pick him up from school. It's very distressing."

The couple took Samantha to the Bristol Royal Infirmary a few days before her first birthday. She died during an operation on 3 February, 1992.

Earlier she had told the General Medical Council hearing that a surgeon, Mr James Wisheart, had told her and her partner that Bristol was one of the best hospitals and that Samantha could live a normal healthy life.

Mr Wisheart, 59, who has since resigned; fellow-surgeon Mr Janardan Dhasmana, 58; and Dr John Roylance deny misconduct relating to 53 operations between 1988 and 1995 in which 29 babies died and four suffered serious brain damage.

The hearing is concerned with the ethical issues and not with criminal negligence.



Christine Hamilton and her husband, the disgraced former Tory MP Neil Hamilton, in London yesterday, where Mrs Hamilton was launching her book on celebrated female battleaxes
Photograph Peter Macdiarmid

Open University backs loans for part-time students

Opening up the Government's new student loans scheme to half a million part-time undergraduates would add no more than 1.5 per cent to the higher education budget, a new study claims.

The report, commissioned by the Open University from the consultants London Economics, suggests extending loans to low-income part-time students to encourage more people to go to university.

Under the Government's proposals, full-time undergraduates will have to contribute towards tuition fees from next September. At the same time, grants will be phased out, but students will have access to state subsidised loans to cover living costs.

The Open University, the largest provider of part-time undergraduate degrees in Britain, is basing its study findings as evidence of the feasibility of allowing part-timers access to loans for the first time.

The university, and others with high numbers of part-time students, hope to use the report to challenge the Government to reconsider its decision to confine loans to full-time undergraduates. The OU research, based on the assumption that loans would be available only to part-time students with an income of less than £10,000, suggests the public expenditure cost of extending the scheme would be no more than £147m, even by 2016.

Lifelong learning minister

Kim Howells last night pledged to study the report closely as part of efforts to widen access to higher education.

Lecturers in many of the country's further education colleges will not receive even a recommended below-inflation pay rise this year as colleges struggle to survive a funding crisis.

The university and college lecturers' union, NATFHE, yesterday warned of plummeting morale as its annual pay survey revealed one in eight colleges cannot afford salary increases. The low settlements mean lecturers' pay will slump further behind secondary school teachers' salaries.

— Lucy Ward
Education Correspondent
In the Eye: Education

Trial told of IRA explosives cache

A cache of explosives and ammunition — linked to an alleged IRA terrorist shot dead by police — was found two months ago, near Chelsea football ground, an Old Bailey court was told yesterday.

It was the second safe lock-up unit discovered after the arrest of four members of an IRA active service unit plotting to bomb London last year, the prosecution alleged. The jury was told that the first was rented under a false name by James Murphy, one of four men accused of conspiring to cause explosions between 1 January and 24 September last year and possessing explosives.

Mr Murphy, 26, Patrick Kelly, 31, Brian McHugh, 31, and Michael Phillips, 22, deny the charges.

The jury was told that masked men had raided the storage firm at Shepherd's Bush, west London, six weeks after Mr Murphy's arrest. They were searching for the unit held under in the name of Murphy and removed its contents. "Nothing was missing from the other units. We say that unit was

used by Murphy — his fingerprints were found on the door and certain items," said David Waters, for the prosecution. A box marked .762 rifle ammunition from Yugoslavia and traces of explosives were discovered near by.

More ammunition — and high explosives — came to light at a storage firm in Chelsea in August this year, said Mr Waters. It had been rented to a John Wilson in 1993. Rent had been paid up until September 1996, but Mr Wilson did not appear after July 1996.

Over a year later, the padlock was cut and a sports bag was found, containing seven sealed packets of ammunition, loose bullets, four blocks of Semtex explosive and 12 timing units, said Mr Waters. He alleged the man known as John Wilson was in fact a suspected IRA activist, Diarmuid O'Neill.

Mr O'Neill — said to be at the heart of an IRA plot to launch a lorry bomb attack in London — was shot dead as police went to arrest him at a west London hotel in September last year.

The trial continues today.

20 years for killer who burnt woman's body

A man who murdered and set alight a university graduate after she fought off his sex attack was jailed yesterday for a minimum of 20 years.

Duncan Birmingham, 32, of Lonsight, Manchester, was found guilty of murdering Rachel Thacker, 21, after she got into his car thinking it was a taxi during a night out with friends.

The jury at Manchester Crown Court took six hours and 38 minutes to find him guilty by a unanimous verdict.

Ms Thacker had been on a night out with friends in Manchester city centre on 10 August last year before Birmingham picked her up in his car in the city's Canal Street.

Her naked and charred body was found the next day behind the George & Dragon pub in Ardwick, Manchester.

Ms Thacker, of Chase Terrace, Cannock, Staffordshire, had recently graduated from the University of Salford and was celebrating a friend's 21st birthday on the night of her murder.

Three charged over baseball-bat attack

Three people were charged yesterday with the attempted murder of a man who was attacked outside his disabled father's home.

West Midlands Police said

two men, aged 38 and 18, and a 17-year-old youth were due to appear before Wolverhampton magistrates this morning.

The three are accused of attempting to murder Lee

Holmes, 27, who suffered serious head injuries outside his father's home in Low Hill, Wolverhampton, when he was beaten over the head with a baseball bat.

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Straw rejects call for law to protect British Muslims

Legislation should be introduced to outlaw 'Islamophobia', the Runnymede Trust argued yesterday. But Clare Gomer says that the Government has no plans to change the law to protect Muslims from religious discrimination.

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, yesterday rejected the key recommendation of the Commission on British Muslims.

The first major study into "Islamophobia" and the position of the British Muslim community concluded that a new legal term such as "religious and racial violence" is urgently needed in order to protect Muslims from physical violence and harassment.

Given that people are often attacked because of their dress or association with a place of worship, the term "racial violence" is no longer adequate, the Runnymede Trust said.

Speaking at the launch of the report "Islamophobia: A challenge for us all" at Westminster yesterday, Mr Straw, whose Blackburn constituency includes 20,000 Muslims, said: "I recognise that there is an important difference between religious and racial identity. I know that some people feel that race legislation is not the answer to the particular problems of the Muslim community. But religious legislation may not be the answer either."

He admitted that the question of harassment of Muslims was a "difficult and sensitive" issue, but added that he had no plans to legislate. "Given the complexity of the matter and our pressures in our parliamentary programme, we don't have immediate plans to legislate on this," he said.

The commission maintained that there were four areas in English law which were not yet developed sufficiently to meet the needs of British Muslims:

discrimination in employment and the provision of services, vilification and blasphemy, incitement to hatred, and violence.

Meanwhile, before new legislation reaches the statute book, the commission recommended that, when sentencing offenders for crimes of violence or harassment, courts should formally treat evidence of religious hatred as an aggravating factor.

The Home Office should give a clear lead on the monitoring of racial and religious violence and police forces should note acts which have a specifically religious dimension.

According to the commission, there is widespread anecdotal evidence in Muslim communities that an individual Muslim is more likely to be a victim of racist violence when he or she is wearing Islamic dress or symbols.

This applies to white Muslims - a white woman wearing the hijab, for example - as well as to South Asians. There is also a widespread perception that Muslims are particularly likely to be attacked when going to or from their local mosque, and that a peak time for racist attacks is the month of Ramadan.

Another recommendation made by the commission, whose committee was multi-ethnic and multi-religious, related to the educational system.

It suggested a review of English language teaching, the development of formal policies and guidance on meeting the pastoral, religious and cultural needs of Muslim pupils in mainstream schools, and the introduction of state funding in Muslim schools.

The commission was set up by the Runnymede Trust, an independent think-tank, in 1996. It set out to counter Islamophobic assumptions that Islam is a single, monolithic system, and draw attention to the particular dangers which Islamophobia creates or exacerbates for Muslim communities - and therefore the well-being of society as a whole.



Fatima Beltagui wearing her hijab, the main theme of an exhibition on 'The Veil in Islam' at the St Mungo Museum in Glasgow. Photograph: Colin Templeton

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How Pakistani voters help shape Cook's policy

The issue of Islamic empowerment in Britain has wide-ranging ramifications. Kim Sengupta examines how Labour's concern over Muslim votes will increasingly influence the political agenda both at home and abroad.

One could hardly have had a more potent example of the power of the Muslim vote: the Queen, the Foreign Secretary, and the Prime Minister of the most populous country in the Commonwealth as the cast of a huge diplomatic row.

The seeds of the problems which bedevilled the royal tour of India lay 5,000 miles away in the marginal constituencies of the United Kingdom.

To put it in its simplest form, Robin Cook's reported offer to mediate in the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan would have pleased Pakistanis, and a large section of the British Muslim electorate. The Pakistanis want to internationalise the issue, the Indians want to keep it bilateral.

There may well, of course, be moral reasons why the Government wants to get involved in Kashmir. There is certainly a very practical reason for paying lip service to doing so.

Historically, Labour has claimed around 90 per cent of the Asian vote. But it can no longer take that for granted,

and the proportion has declined over the last decade.

The Pakistani electorate is concentrated mostly in the Midlands and the North-west where there were a large cluster of marginal seats before the election. Mr Cook should know the psephological details of this well. Two years ago, as shadow foreign secretary, he made a speech in Brent, north London, implying support for the Indian position on Kashmir. He was warned that in at least 30 marginal seats, the Pakistani vote could tip the balance against Labour.

MPs in constituencies with large Muslim populations have championed causes like Kashmiri independence. However, this has not saved them all from falling victim to Muslim activists flexing their muscle.

At Bradford West, Max Madden had assiduously cultivated the Muslim vote, and spoken repeatedly about Kashmiri independence in the Commons. But this did not prevent his deselection before the election. Subsequent infighting between Muslim factions allowed a Sikh, Manjit Singh, to become the candidate, and win the seat.

Muslim activists are determined to use their electoral power to influence Labour policies. Dr Ghayasuddin Siddiqui, leader of Britain's Muslim Parliament, stated: "The problem is not that British Muslims are trying to influence the political process too much; it is they are doing nothing like enough."

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Nintendo opens games price war

A computer game price war broke out yesterday as Nintendo slashed the price of its game console in response to a new giveaway by arch-rival PlayStation. It marks the latest shot in the bruising battle for customers in the run-up to Christmas.

From tomorrow the price of the Nintendo 64 games console will fall from £149.99 to £99.99. It comes less than a week after Sony launched the PlayStation Value Pack. Customers paying £129.99 for a PlayStation now get a memory card and a second controller for an extra player, worth about £33.

The aggressive price cut is the latest in an increasingly bitter conflict between Nintendo and Sony in the United Kingdom which goes back to 1995, when the PlayStation was launched. Since then Sony has captured more than 50 per cent of the computer games market, selling 1.4 million consoles.

Last March saw the launch of the new Nintendo 64, billed as the most powerful games console on earth. However, just 24 hours before it was due to hit the shelves, Sony slashed the price of the PlayStation by £100. Nintendo was forced to

follow suit just three weeks later after sales of its new console proved disappointing.

The latest price cut, however, signals that Nintendo is determined to wrestle the initiative from Sony. Nintendo has also stepped up the pressure on PlayStation by reducing the price of flagship games such as Super Mario by £10 to £49.99.

A Nintendo spokesman said: "We want to dominate the market. PlayStation will be looking behind their backs now. Anything could happen next. They say a week is a long time in politics, but that is nothing compared to this industry."

A PlayStation spokesman said: "PlayStation has established itself as market leader in every country around the world. Because we have sold over 20 million units we can now afford to bring PlayStation to more people. We fully expect to dominate this Christmas as we have done every Christmas since launch."

However, Nintendo and PlayStation will still have to compete with the Teletubbies and Spice Girl dolls which are expected to be the most sought after toys this Christmas.

— Andrew Yates



Galiano: First time British Designer of the Year title has been shared

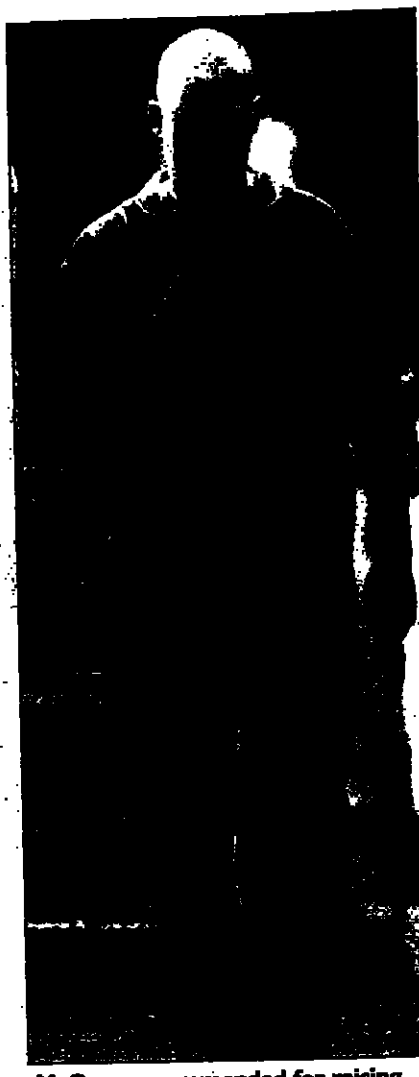
Fashion duo's winning act

John Galiano and Alexander McQueen were last night jointly awarded the British Designer of the Year title. It is the first time it has been shared but the decision, by the British Fashion Council, with votes from industry, has been well-received. It is accepted that the two contrasting designers have raised the profile of British fashion beyond all expectations.

Second in importance to their award is the one for New Generation, and 28-year-old Antonio Berardi beat the rest of the young guns. He has quickly become a main London attraction for his attention to beautiful detail and for the pure sexiness of his clothes.

Other awards went to Jigsaw for best retailer, Pearce Fionda for glamour, milliner Philip Treacy for accessories, John Smedley for classic design and Nicole Farhi for contemporary collections. A new award for menswear design went to Paul Smith. Bryce Oldfield presented a special tribute to Diana, Princess of Wales, honouring her contribution to British fashion.

Melanie Rickey Photographs: Ben Elwes



McQueen: commended for raising British fashion's profile

Immigration chiefs fear influx of more gypsy 'refugees'

Immigration officials fear a "copycat" influx of gypsies from across Central and Eastern Europe after the arrival of hundreds of Czech and Slovak asylum-seekers in Britain. Politicians from Conservative and Labour-controlled councils in Kent will meet the Home Office minister, Michael O'Brien, this afternoon to discuss the financial impact of accommodating the increasing number of arrivals at Dover and call for the introduction of visas.

Alexander Bruce-Lockhart, Tory leader of Kent Council County, who is part of the delegation which will lobby for more money to deal with the cost of accommodating the families and educating the children, said a senior immigration official told him that the problems could worsen because of television coverage overseas about the arrivals which, according to council officials, painted Kent as "the land of milk and honey".

Mr Bruce-Lockhart said: "[The immigration official] said that in Poland they are screening film of these people arriving here. He said it's possible it might encourage others from Poland to join the main exodus."

— Michael Streeter and Colin Brown

Victim locked up with abuser

A young offender who had been abused as a child was locked up on the same prison wing as his attacker, according to a report published today. The man, who could have been as young as 15, was being kept in a unit for vulnerable prisoners. "Fortunately the abuser being kept in his victim," said Sir David Ramsbotham, Chief Inspector of Prisons, in his study of Cardiff jail, which highlights the dangers of putting young offenders alongside adult inmates.

Sir David called for prison staff to be given more information about inmates, such as probation, social service, medical, education and police reports, to ensure victims did not have to face their assailants. He said that overcrowding was forcing the authorities to house young offenders aged from 15 to 21 with adults on the same landing. However, Richard Tilt, director-general of the Prison Service, questioned the accuracy of the comment and said if the Inspectorate had evidence of the allegation it should be given to the service.

— Jason Bennett

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DAILY POEM

The Two Corbies

As I was walking all alone
I heard two corbies making a mane;
The tane unto the t'other say,
"Where sall we gang and dine to-day?"

"In behind yon auld fail dyke,
I wot there lies a new-slain Knight;
And naeboddy kens that he lies there,
But his hawk, his hound, and lady fair."

"His hound is to the hunting gane,
His hawk to fetch the wild-fowl hame,
His lady's ta'en another mate,
So we may make our dinner sweet."

"Ye'll sit on his white hause-bane,
And I'll pick out his bonny blue een:
Wi' ae lock o' his gowden hair
We'll theek our nest when it grows bare."

"Mony a one for him makes mane,
But none sall ken where he is gane;
O'er his white banes, when they are bare,
The wind sall blaw for evermair."

This week's poems come from *Poets on Poets*, a 400-page anthology from Carcanet Press, in association with Waterstone's (£9.95). Almost 100 modern poets present work from poets of the past. Matthew Sweeney introduces his selection of Border Ballads; *The Two Corbies* was first collected in Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* in 1802. "Corbies" are crows; a "fail dyke" a turf wall; a "hause-bane" a neck-bone; "theek" means line.

THE INDEPENDENT

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Royal retreat in search of new way forward

The Queen has ambitious and controversial plans for her Balmoral estate, where she is wrestling with the same environmental problems besetting other owners of great tracts of Scottish highland.

Nicholas Schoon was given a guided tour.

The Queen has no qualms about charging her subjects more to visit Balmoral. Nor is she reluctant to ask the Government – and therefore taxpayers – to help finance conservation activities on her 55,000-acre estate, where the public are fairly free to roam. She is seeking about £250,000 in grants to plant nearly 600 acres of new forest, greatly expanding the existing Scots pine woodlands. "If grants are available we'll go for them," said Peter Ord, the estate manager. "We couldn't afford to be doing it without them." He feels the fact the Queen now pays income tax makes such applications less awkward.

The point of these new woodlands is not to provide timber, but to create wildlife habitat and change the scenery. They will make the estate more like the untamed wilderness it was several thousand years ago, before most of its forest was felled.

It is a visionary plan, for which approval from the Government's Forestry Authority is awaited. With such a harsh climate and poor soil, the trees will not mature until Prince William is past the usual retirement age. It may also be controversial, because several miles of fencing will be put up – starting next summer – to stop red deer eating and killing the young trees. These fences are known to kill the capercaillie, a

large, rare bird of highland forests with a tendency to fly into them at high speed.

Some conservation groups say trees can be grown in the Highlands without fences and without being munched to death, provided the deer are culled. They would once have been the prey of wolves and culling would maintain a more natural ecological balance.

But the Royal Family enjoys its stalking and insists Balmoral will remain primarily a sporting estate. The aim is to keep a relatively high deer population, 2,500 or more, which would allow 200 stags to be shot each year. Fences are essential to protect young forests and allow existing woodland to regenerate.

The Royal Family is also courting controversy as it grapples with the rising tide of walkers enjoying – but also threatening – the area's sombre beauty. Each year, over 100,000 people drive up a dead-end road to the Spital of Muick, on Balmoral's southern edge. For much of the year, the 60-space car park overflows on to the narrow road, churning up verges. Many footpaths across the estate and up its 3,791ft peak, Lochnagar, are badly eroded by walkers. About £100,000 a year is now spent on paying rangers and on repairing footpaths, but only £30,000 comes from the Queen; the bulk is from government grants.

Along with other landowners, authorities and consultants, Balmoral is promoting the creation of an Upper Deeside Public Access Trust, which will attempt to find the best ways of allowing as many as possible to enjoy the area without damaging it. One option is to introduce a car parking charge of £3-£5. Another is to close the road at peak times and run a shuttle bus service.

Any changes will be with the agreement of the authorities and other landowners and after extensive consultation. Bal-

moral will not be acting alone.

Entry charges at Balmoral will be raised when the house and gardens are open from May to July next summer. Only the ballroom in the castle is opened, and there are no plans to change that. Nor will the public be allowed in during the peak months of August and September, when the Royal Family is in residence.

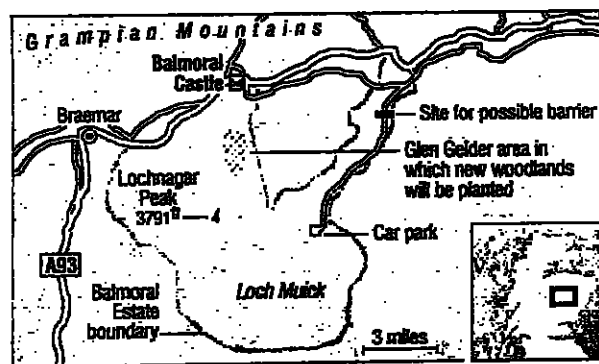
But while Balmoral is far from being exploited to the full as a tourist money-spinner, visitor charges are still the estate's biggest earner. Timber sales come in second, followed by sales of venison. Mr Ord says Balmoral, with 50 full-time staff, loses money overall, and he is looking for new income.

Balmoral's nine-hole golf course is available for limited corporate hospitality, while some of the deer stalking is on offer at £275 a stag.

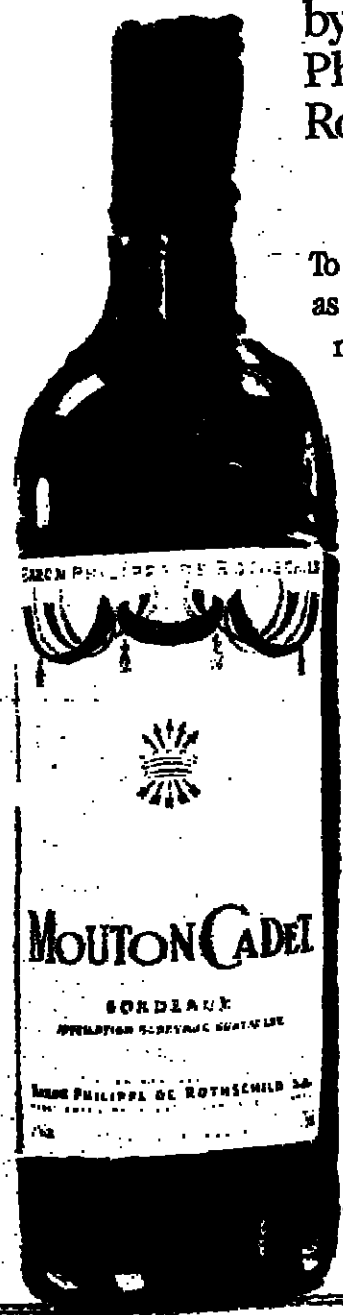


Castle homes: The Queen is planning 600 acres of new forest at Balmoral to encourage wildlife and restore the landscape of a bygone age. Photograph: Chris Bacon

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Bishops force a retreat over church schools

Ministers are preparing to climb down over proposals in the education White Paper which affect church schools. The move came as Church of England bishops threatened to vote against parts of the education Bill in the House of Lords unless the Government thinks again.

Judith Judd, Education Editor, looks at the row.

More than 50 years after the churches secured their present partnership with the state in education through the 1944 Education Act, their influence remains powerful. The bishops yesterday took the unusual step of calling a press conference to publicise their concern about the White Paper. They did so, they said, because ministers were threatening the future of denominational schools "by muddle rather than malevolence."

And they feared the Bill to be introduced in Parliament next month could unravel arrangements which have helped to ensure the distinctive ethos and popularity of 6,500 church schools. Although only the Church of England bishops sit in the Lords, the Roman Catholic and Methodist churches are also concerned about the plans. The Prime Minister, who sends his children to a grant-maintained Roman Catholic school, is likely to be particularly sensitive to their criticism.

The Bishop of Ripon, the Rt Rev David Young, who chairs the board of education of the Church of England's general synod, said: "The mood of the bishops is that if we are not satisfied we would want to make that clear. We would be looking for amendments as the Bill went through to Parliament." His message for Mr Blair was: "These schools are excellent and sought-after and we wish that position to be maintained."

Within hours, Stephen Byers, the school-standards minister, promised that the Government would not be introducing any measures which would weaken or diminish church schools. Details of the concessions are expected to emerge at a meeting with church representatives on

Monday. The bishops' concern centres on the section of the White Paper which proposes three categories of schools, foundation, community or aided.

This assumes most voluntary-aided church schools would become aided, grant-maintained schools would become foundation and local authority schools would become community.

Ministers are understood to be ready to give way over the plan that the majority enjoyed by church governors in aided schools would be reduced from two or three to one to make way for more parent governors. Churches have suggested one of the church governors might be a parent.

The Government is also believed to be preparing a concession over its proposal that 2,700 voluntary controlled schools should become foundation schools, the category created for the former grant-maintained schools. Controlled schools are church foundations and the church owns the buildings but they are maintained by the local authority, unlike voluntary-aided schools, which manage their own buildings and contribute 15 per cent towards the cost.

The bishops fear controlled schools, many of which have voted against grant-maintained status, will opt for community status rather than foundation status and break their links with the church. They are also worried by the proposal that voluntary controlled schools would not be able to keep their church religious education syllabuses and would have to use one approved by the local authority.

Ministers are, however, unlikely to give way to church concerns about losing control over admissions. At present, voluntary-aided schools decide their own admissions policy in consultation with the local authority. The White Paper says an independent adjudicator will decide disputes between the school and the authority. Geoffrey Duncan, secretary of the board of education, said he was sure the Government did not intend to break its manifesto commitment to maintaining church schools. "But if the church's status is reduced, if its power over admissions is reduced, if we have fewer church-appointed governors, you can infer that that promise is not being entirely kept."

In the Eye: Education +



Jason, a pupil at a learning-support centre, with teacher Louise Smith at Saffron Walden County High School, Essex

Photograph: Brian Harris

Labour plan to resolve special needs dilemma

More of the 1.4 million children with special needs should be in mainstream schools, the Government thinks. Its Green Paper tries to end the debate about where they should be taught, says Judith Judd, Education Editor.

Almost one in five pupils has special educational needs and many could flourish independently if they were given the right support, David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education, said.

Teachers reminded the Government that such children may be very difficult to teach and that more funding would be

required if they were to be educated in ordinary schools. Special schools would not disappear but would be used for fewer children for shorter periods, Mr Blunkett said. Their expertise would be used to support pupils in mainstream schools.

"What we cannot have are children sent to special schools and presumed to be there for the rest of their lives," added Mr Blunkett, who was educated at a residential special school for the blind.

The number of children in special schools is falling sharply. Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, said the Government must be in cloud-cuckoo-land if it believed it could raise standards and return the most disruptive children to mainstream classrooms. Mr Blunkett said only

a tiny proportion of special-needs children had emotional and behavioural disorders. There was no question of children remaining in the classroom if they were disrupting others' lives.

Yesterday's document was concerned with all types of special needs, which include the blind, the deaf and the dyslexic. One of its most controversial proposals is that the 3 per cent of children with "statements" of need which entitle their schools to extra cash should be reduced to 2 per cent.


Ministers believe the system of statementing is bureaucratic and wasteful and that the money would be better spent helping children earlier in their school careers. The number of children with statements has risen from 153,000 to 233,000 since 1991 and there are 2,000 cases be-

fore tribunals as parents challenge decisions by local education authorities about how their children's needs should be met.

About one-seventh of local authorities' budget - £2.5bn - is spent on special needs. Ministers say they want value for money, not cost-cutting. The paper proposes that all parents of special-needs children would be supported by independent advisers who would, if necessary, negotiate with schools on their behalf.

Estelle Morris, the schools minister, said: "The right to a statement will remain. But some parents are pushing for a statement as a way of getting resources for their children they don't feel they can get any other way. It is not right for these children to have to wait the 18 months that this process can take."

Leading article, page 22



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THE INDEPENDENT
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Dear Yamamoto-san,

Mohammed A. Rahim and I were abducted at 12.10 on Sunday 12th on the road just north of Marib. We were taken by helicopter to a place near Marib in West Sahel - about 100km south-west of Marib at a place called Al-Khass or Bani Dabayan. It's a very beautiful place. The people here treated us very well - we are very comfortable, well-fed and the people are courteous. The people here, some 12 families - have a number of grievances with government and want to discuss the grievances with you in a friendly way, supply, road, clinic.

Best regards,

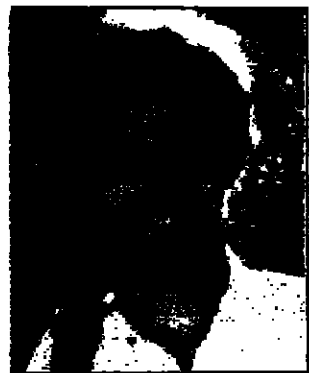
Henry Thompson



Above: An extract from Henry Thompson's letter. The government in Sana'a (right) is the real target for the message, despite its being addressed to 'Yamamoto-San'

Photograph: Robert Harding Picture Library

Hostage's letter names the price of freedom



Henry Thompson, the British aid worker kidnapped by Yemeni tribesmen (pictured above) has been allowed to send a letter explaining how he was captured. Patrick Cockburn analyses the letter obtained by The Independent, sent from the tribal stronghold south of the city of Marib where Mr Thompson is being held.

It is a relaxed letter, sent by Henry Thompson, a 38-year-old British aid worker, four days after he and his driver, Mohammed Abdul-Rahman, were kidnapped just north of the town of Marib, 45 miles south of the capital Sana'a. It is addressed to 'Yamamoto-San', a diplomat at the Japanese embassy who is in charge of Japan's aid to Yemen. Mr Thompson had been working for the Japan International Co-operation Agency.

But in fact the letter was sent, through the kidnappers, to the Yemeni Interior Ministry, which handles most security

the city of Marib. The fact the kidnappers allowed Mr Thompson to give such precise details of where he is shows they are confident the government will make no attempt to free him by an armed assault.

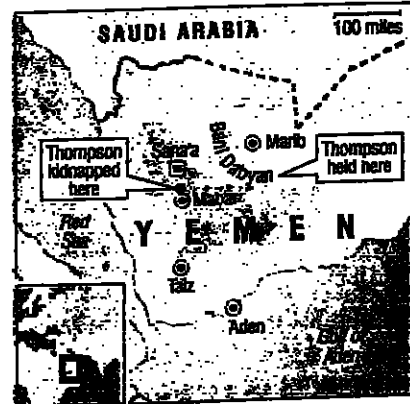
Mr Thompson, who has experience in aid work, chiefly in Africa, is worried he will not be able to complete his project for the aid agency and wants 'to stay in Yemen to complete most of my work before leaving'. He says he is being treated well, which is in keeping with the experience of other kidnap victims in Yemen, and 'we are very comfortable, well fed and the people are courteous'.

All this is probably true, although the letter will have been seen by the kidnappers. Their purpose in passing it on to the Interior Ministry - presumably through tribal intermediaries - is to state their demands. Mr Thompson says there are 17 families where he is kept - in the territory of the Bani Dabayan (usually spelt Bani Zabyan in English) and they want the government to discuss the provision of better social services such as 'water-supply, road, clinic, etc'. He asks for the Interior Ministry to be contacted 'to help in negotiating my release'. 'Negotiating' is the only word underlined in the whole letter.

The negotiations are being overseen by Naji al-Soufi, the governor of Sana'a, who comes from the district where Mr Thompson is being held. A tribal sheikh who saw Mr Thompson on Monday said he was well. Yemeni officials do not believe social grievances are the Bani Zabyan's sole motive for the kidnapping. They say the government has usually got people released by paying money and making gifts, such as four-wheel-drive cars. In Mr Thompson's case, however, there are unconfirmed reports that the kidnappers want a letter of guarantee saying their demand for a road water supply and a clinic will be met.

In private, the government believes the rash of kidnappings in Yemen since 1990 is inspired by Saudi Arabia, which has traditionally kept the tribes in the north and east in its pay. Tribesmen protesting against a rise in the price of diesel this week clashed with the army just south of where Mr Thompson was kidnapped. Unconfirmed reports say two tribesmen and one soldier were killed.

■ Sana'a (AP) - Yemeni tribesmen holding Mr Thompson hostage have refused to negotiate with the government and are demanding a ransom, security officials said yesterday. The size of the ransom was not disclosed.



matters in Yemen. The words in Arabic across the top of the page simply say a copy of the document has been kept.

According to his letter, Mr Thompson was captured four days earlier than originally assumed by the Yemeni government and the British embassy. He explains how he and Mohammed Abdul-Rahman were 'abducted at 12.10 on 12 Sunday on the road just north of Marib'. This is on the main road between Sana'a and Taiz, the country's second biggest city. He confirms he is held at 'Bani Dabayan', south-west of

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Cancer drug trial lacking volunteers

Women at a high risk of breast cancer were urged yesterday to volunteer for a clinical trial which could provide a breakthrough in preventing the disease. Scientists hope the anti-cancer drug tamoxifen could reduce cases by 50 per cent in women at high risk. But if there are not enough volunteers the trial may collapse says Glenda Cooper, Social Affairs Correspondent.

Scientists said yesterday that they hoped cases of breast cancer in women with a strong family history of contracting the disease could be reduced by up to a half if an anti-cancer drug proves effective in preventing the disease.

"This is probably the most important question in breast cancer today - can we prevent it as well as trying to treat it? It could be the beginning of something very, very big," said Dr Jack Cuzick, the study's scientific director.

But he warned that Britain's only clinical trial investigating tamoxifen could fail unless more women come forward to take part. Britain is playing a key role in the International Breast Cancer Intervention Study, which has a target of 7,000 volunteers world-wide. The British arm, however, has only recruited 2,200 women against the target of 5,000.

"We are having problems in recruitment because many eligible groups of women don't even know about the trial," said Dr Cuzick. "Women who are well may also be reluctant to go into a trial which involves taking a drug as a preventive measure. But the study is vitally important because tamoxifen may offer the only preventive option for women at a high family risk of breast cancer - other than a double mastectomy."

Half the women on the trial receive the anti-cancer drug while the rest are given a placebo. Each woman has a check-up every six months and a mammogram every 12-18 months.

Tamoxifen, which was first introduced in 1969, is already the leading drug treatment for breast cancer and is taken by more than a million women around the world. At present, one in 12 women in the United Kingdom will develop breast cancer at some point in their lives and 14,000 women die of the disease every year.

Studies show that giving women the drug for more than two years after a breast cancer operation saves nearly 9 per cent extra lives and cuts women's chances of developing new tumours in their other breasts by more than 40 per cent. It also improves bone strength in post-menopausal women, helps to prevent osteoporosis and reduce blood fats which helps to prevent heart disease.

Side-effects include hot flashes and a small risk of cancer of the womb lining; doctors believe that the usual risk of the disease rises from 3 per 10,000 post-menopausal women each year to 6-9 per 10,000 per year.

"This increased risk can understandably be worrying for women - but it is important to put it in context," said Professor Tony Howell, a Cancer Research Campaign consultant on the trial. "For women on the trial the chance of them developing cancer of the womb lining is far less than their chance of developing breast cancer. Cancer of the womb lining is also relatively easy to cure."

Dr Cuzick warned that failure of the British contribution could threaten the whole project. "We need enough numbers to come up with clear answers."

Linda Hinds, 39, who joined the trial three years ago, said her mother, grandmother and aunt all died from breast cancer when they were young. "I was 18 when my mother died," she said. "To see someone die of breast cancer is unbelievable. It's absolutely horrible. We said to the hospital before she died 'can't you just do something - to put her and her family out of their misery?' And she had watched her own mother die of the same thing."

Any woman aged 35 to 70 who is at high family risk of breast cancer and wants more details about the trial can call 0171 269 3151.



Chris Warne, whose death this week is thought to be due to v-CJD Photograph: Page One

Fitness fanatic dies as CJD toll rises

A 36-year-old fitness fanatic who died this week is reckoned to be the 21st to die in Britain of a fatal illness caused by BSE, or mad cow disease, in the past three years.

The death of Chris Warne, from Ripley in Derbyshire, of "new variant" Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (v-CJD) came amid warnings that any epidemic of the disease could bring a core crisis in 20 years. The CJD Support Network, run by families who have lost relatives to the illness, said that if the number of cases of the brain disease, caused by eating BSE-infected food, rose dramatically over the next two decades, then health and social services would not be able to cope.

Mr Warne was a computer systems analyst and keen on sports. His parents insisted that he had never worked with animals. He was only diagnosed as having v-CJD, which causes depression and increasing lack of co-ordination, followed by coma and death, in August. Doctors at Derbyshire Royal Infirmary were yesterday awaiting the results of a post mortem, which is necessary to confirm any diagnosis of v-CJD.

A growing weight of scientific data has shown that v-CJD, which was only identified clinically in 1996, is caused by the same disease agent that causes BSE in cattle. More than 160,000 BSE cases have

been confirmed in British cattle since 1988, but hundreds of thousands more animals infected with the disease would have entered the food chain.

Scientists are still unsure how infective BSE is to humans, and cannot rule out the possibility that many thousands of people may be affected in the next 20 years, as the disease could take decades to incubate before symptoms show.

The CJD Support Network has called on the Government to develop a national strategy to enable social services and health teams to cope.

Gillian Turner, of the Network, told *Community Care* magazine: "The Government must prepare health and social workers to go into action to help clients who develop all forms of CJD. This preparation must include a full range of dementia services in every district, backed by adequate resources."

Terry Philpot, editor of *Community Care*, said: "The Government needs to look at this situation very carefully. An explosion of CJD cases may have enormous implications for social services and resources. The Department of Health needs to develop cross-agency policies between health and social services to ensure proper care for people with this deadly disease."

— Charles Arthur, Science Editor

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Why Kent is all abroad for France

Residents of Kent – the Garden of England – see their futures in a select economic zone called Region Transmanche. Michael Streeter examines a very European view of regionalism.

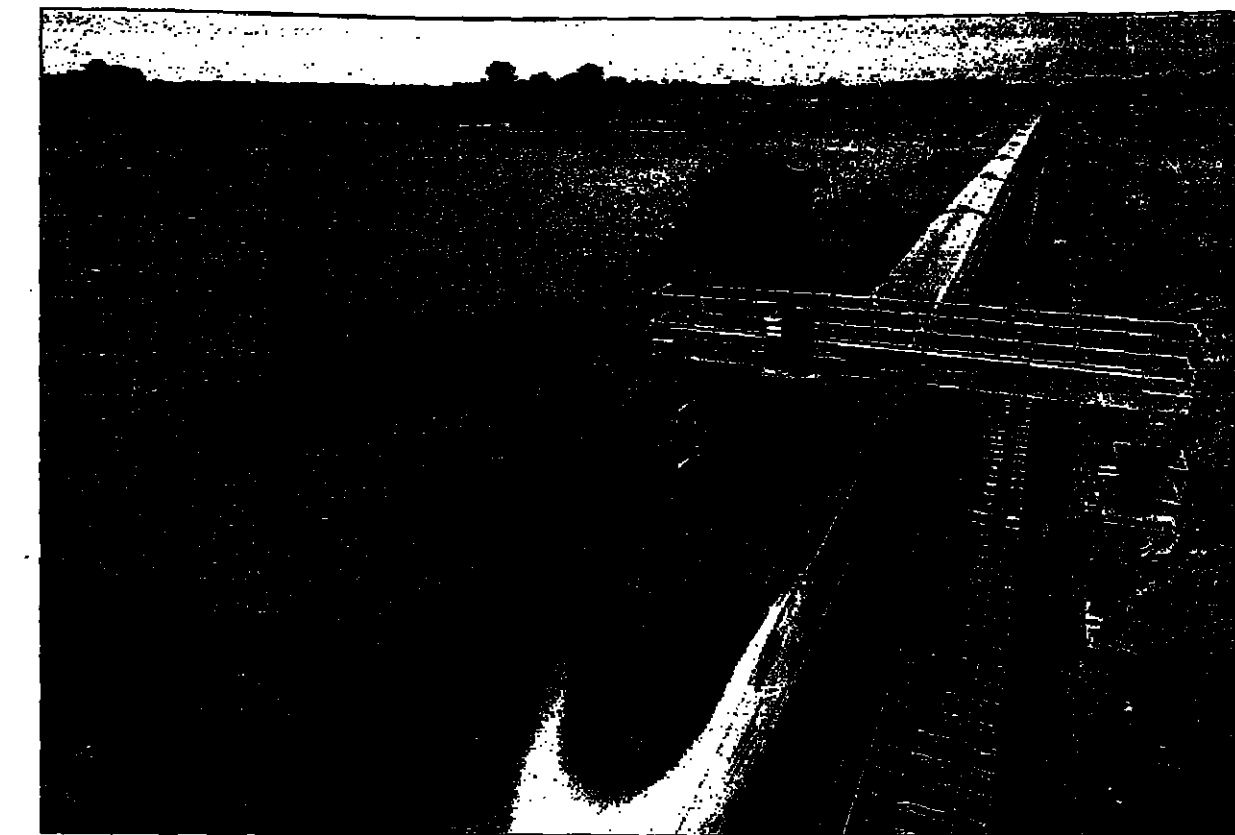
No one demonstrates on the streets of Guildford or Folkestone to represent the neglected voice of the South-east. The passion which demands local autonomy for regions such as Yorkshire and the West Country barely registers in the South-east.

An area which, based on government administrative boundaries, stretches down from Oxfordshire, skirts around London, and ends up in the far reaches of Kent, taking in a population of nearly 8 million, has virtually no sense of identity, no roots, no separate tradition. Yet regionalism is flourishing in the far south-east corner of England. Kent, coun-

ty of Colin Cowdrey, fruit orchards and the *Darling Buds of May*, has embraced its near neighbours across the water and is part of a European Union region which boasts a population of 15 million.

The area, which takes in Kent, the French district of Nord-Pas de Calais and all three regions of Belgium, is known as Region Transmanche and has an increasingly powerful voice when it comes to obtaining EU money from Brussels. Kent's membership means it can share in grants for inter-regional projects in a programme known as Interreg. It has received around £60m in extra funding through its links.

The Euroregion builds on existing connections between the areas through ferries, the Channel Tunnel and Transmanche – a link between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais. Businesses on both sides of the water are on a joint Internet databank, to allow easy co-operation between firms. Commuting to work, both ways, between England and France is



Semi-detached suburbia: The Eurostar crosses Kent en route to Paris

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

becoming increasingly common. Schoolchildren are crossing the Channel for their French lessons, householders do their weekly shopping in Gallic supermarkets and some British friends now gather for an end of week get-together in France rather than their local pub.

Leaders of the five local authorities involved meet formally twice a year, and more

often at informal gatherings. The Kent County Council leader Alexander Bruce-Lockhart says: "Kent is very happy to be seen as a European county. Nobody feels that they are part of a South-east region. There is no regional identity, no popular demand."

He speaks as leader of the ruling Conservative group but considers the developing links with European neighbours to

be based on practicalities rather than ideology. "It's all about geography," he says. "For example I can get a train from my local station at Ashford and be in Lille slightly quicker than I can get to London."

The future of the proposed South East Regional Development Board, part of the Government's devolution plans which could lead to assemblies, excites little real enthu-

siasm in Kent. Mr Bruce-Lockhart believes it could have a useful if limited role but worries it will take from local democracy without adding any new accountability.

Labour's Reg Hansell, county councillor for Dover, hopes it will be helpful, but says that existing structures have done relatively little for Kent. "We have gained far more from the European side."

CROSS-CHANNEL COMMUTER



Julian Lucas's lifestyle exemplifies the growing links between Kent and the Continent. Each day he commutes from his home near Deal across the Channel to Calais, where he runs a French and English-owned advertising agency called Transmanche Publicité.

"On a good day, if all goes well, I can do the trip in an hour," says Mr Lucas. "Sometimes I go by hovercraft, sometimes I go by train, it depends on the time of year and the weather."

The direction of commuting can cut different ways. There are those British people, like Mr Lucas, who commute to work in France, and others who have sold their British homes and moved to France (where house prices tend to be lower), but still commute to Kent for their work. And

there are also French people who travel daily.

"I met a Frenchman this morning who lives just outside Dover, and works in Paris," said Mr Lucas. "It works both ways."

The price of commuting can vary a great deal according to the season, and special offers, but Mr Lucas says it can cost as little as £10 a day. "The good thing about the tunnel is that it is open 24 hours a day and is not so affected by the weather."

Not everyone is Kent is delighted with the closer co-operation. "There are some here who want the tunnel to be blocked up and for the barricades to be put up. But in the 15 years I have lived here things have improved," said Mr Lucas. "I get the best of both worlds. I'm very fortunate."

— Michael Streeter

Prescott's masterplan runs into the sand

A turf war among Labour ministers is threatening to delay plans to establish new development agencies for the English regions. David Walker says the creation of elected regional assemblies is receding into the distance.

Ambitious plans hatched by the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, to expand regional government in England have been whittled down after strong opposition from cabinet colleagues.

According to Whitehall, intervention from Number 10 showed a "distinct lack of enthusiasm" for the creation of powerful regional development agencies, which were intended to be the precursors of new structures of government in Leeds, Newcastle upon Tyne, Manchester and other regional centres.

Instead, a White Paper due next month from the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions – though it may now be delayed – will propose weaker bodies with little or no direct spending responsibilities.

In cabinet committees, Mr

Prescott's junior minister Richard Caborn is said to have been "rolled over" by ministers unwilling to relinquish powers to the strong regional bodies originally envisaged by Mr Prescott. The civil service-run government offices for the regions are to be strengthened rather than weakened and work alongside any new agencies; they will retain control of the multi-million Single Regeneration Budget.

The White Paper's version of regional development agencies will be pale shadows of those proposed in pre-election Labour papers. David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, has successfully fended off takeover of Training and Enterprise Councils and Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, has vetoed regionalisation of inward investment incentives and industrial assistance. The regional bodies will at most acquire planning powers, at present held by councils, and part of the job of assembling and marketing land for development.

One of the Government's headaches is aligning its plans for London with the creation of development agencies in the regions. The North-east is going to be extremely unhappy with anything short of a new public sector agency with a budget of its own and specific responsi-

bility for transport. Meanwhile, in London the private sector has been lobbying strongly for a London Development Agency that resembles the no-cost private sector London First; London is to have a separate public transport authority.

A possible compromise is the creation of agencies with a majority of business nominees but with some right to direct the spending of English Partnerships, the land assembly and regeneration quango, and limited responsibilities for transport co-ordination. They would be serviced by the government offices for the regions at minimal additional cost.

As for the creation of elected assemblies, preparatory thinking is being deferred until a second Labour term and even then, according to a source in Yorkshire and Humberside, ostensibly one of the keenest on regional development, "we are unlikely to see anything much happen".

Mr Prescott is likely to be criticised within the Labour Party for putting the cart before the horse by creating new quangos before thinking about their democratic accountability. The White Paper is likely to recommend local authorities and business in the regions to come together in new non-statutory "chambers", but commit no new public money to this.

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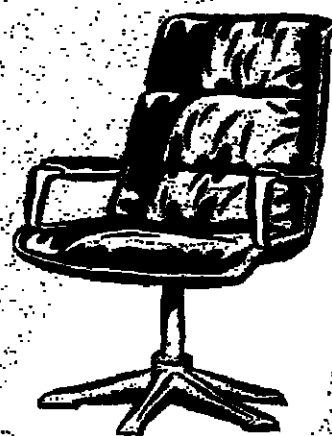


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Brickies pull in £700 a week as South-east goes on a construction spree



Top job: A lack of building workers means that brickies can earn £700 per week

The London builder's moneybox - his pay packet rather than his rear-end trouser cleavage - is full to overflowing. **Barrie Clement**, Labour Editor, on a resurgence in the construction industry

Some bricklayers in the South-East of England "won't get out of bed for less than £1,000 a week," according to rumours in the building world.

While that may well be an exaggeration, Sir Martin Luing, president and chairman of the construction group John Luing, estimates that brickies can earn up to £700 on some sites. And he has a vested interest in talking rates down.

Such wages constitute a dramatic recovery on the £250 a week earned by those bricklayers lucky enough to find a job during the recession in the early 1990s. Work was sporadic, scarce and, according to the employers' organisation, the Construction Confederation, around 500,000 people left the industry - many of them never to return.

Some building workers found themselves travelling from site to site "looking for a start" on the few projects that survived the ravages of the recession.

For every job available, there were 10 unemployed. It was certainly the worst of times for the industry, according to employers. It was far worse than the 1930s, because the recession was longer and deeper.

But as the economy improved, it prompted a boom in wages in London and the South-East. The scarcity of construction workers was made worse by the exodus from the industry.

The wages explosion has been particularly marked on large time-sensitive projects such as the Jubilee Underground line. The most sensitive of all are the Millennium projects - a point not lost on people working on the Dome at Greenwich.

But the Construction Confederation says the highest wages are earned on small housing projects where the developer insists work be turned out on time. While bricklayers have increasingly become the building-site aristocrats, other craftsmen are not far behind. Plasterers, painters, carpenters and joiners are all in short supply and can make £500 a week or more.

A confederation survey found 78 per cent of companies nationally reported difficulties hiring bricklayers and 68 per cent problems finding carpenters and joiners.

The balance of companies planning to take on more staff over the next three

months compared with those expecting staff cuts had widened from 17 per cent to 26 per cent since the second quarter of this year. Apart from pockets of frenetic activity in city centres, elsewhere in Britain the further you go from London, the lower the wages.

The nationally negotiated guaranteed minimum earnings of £156 for a 39-hour week for a labourer and £188.37 for a craft worker are regarded as something of a joke in most parts of the industry. On the Celtic fringes, however, the joke begins to pale, because pay is substantially lower.

Alan Hughes, of the Construction Confederation, says the £700 a week mentioned by Sir Martin is only rarely obtainable even in the South-East. He concedes, however, that wages vary widely according to location, labour availability and the profits sub-contractors believe they can make. Mr Hughes contends that the industry as a whole is not experiencing a skills crisis, but in the South-East the problem is growing worse by the month. He says the so-called boom in wages is patchy. Those who look with a degree of envy at the aristocratic artisans arriving at work in London in a Merc or Jag can content themselves that all good things come to an end. Come the recession, they will all be back on the bus.

Blue-collar workers a dying species

The lion's share of the best jobs over the next decade will be created in the South-East of England. **Barrie Clement** looks at a survey which predicts that only one in five of the workforce will be manual workers.

There will be an extra 500,000 "knowledge workers" in the South-East by 2006, while the whole of the West Midlands will only see another 80,000 jobs created, according to the Business Strategies economic forecasting group. After the South-East, the other big beneficiary of the explosion in jobs for "suits" will be the South-West, with 130,000 jobs.

Neil Blake, research director of Business Strategies, said that while the information-technology revolution might level out regional differences, it was making matters worse by separating production jobs from the better-paid supporting service jobs. "Despite the increasing pace of development in Scotland's Silicon Glen, the South of England continues to dominate in computer software and support jobs, while other regions lag behind."

The fastest growth in employment over the next decade is likely to occur in personal services such as restaurant and bar staff, but it will be a slower rate of increase than in the past.

Other occupations set to see an increase in demand are technical and associate professionals where jobs will be split equally between men and women. A growth is also likely among managers and sales staff and in both cases it is women who will take most of the jobs.

As employment for managers and professionals grows,

the number of jobs for manual workers will decline. Even skilled blue-collar staff, especially in traditional occupations, will face a lower demand for their services, according to the forecasting group.

In 1981 manual jobs - skilled and unskilled - made up almost a third of total employment in the economy, but by 1996 that had fallen to 22.4 per cent. By 2006 the proportion will have dropped to 20 per cent. Falls in such kinds of employment will disproportionately hit the North and Scotland.

In 1981 there were nearly 6 million employed in manufacturing and 2.5 million in financial and business services. The two are now equal, at a little over 4 million. Public services continue to be the largest sector and by 2006 they may account for the employment of more than 8 million people. The biggest growth area will be health sector, where an ageing population is expected to contribute to growing demand.

The number of jobs for managers, scientists, doctors, nurses, teachers, computer experts, legal executives and other professionals has risen from 8.7 million in 1991 to 9.2 million last year and is set to rise to 10.5 million by 2006.

That amounts to a forecasted increase of 13.6 per cent, compared with an expected rise in total employment of 5.6 per cent.

Roughly half the increase in employment between 1996 and 2006 will be increased self-employment and the other half by additional part-time jobs. Full-time employment is unlikely to increase.

Women will probably win two-thirds of the extra jobs and men one-third - although there will continue to be more men than women in employment.

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Stench of death in Algeria's perfumed killing fields

The Algerian army has poured troops into the Mitidja plain, south of Algiers, and says it has surrounded scores of armed 'Islamists' in the town of Ouled-Allel and the forest of Bainem. But, as our correspondent discovers in Benthalha, scene of one of the worst massacres last month, villagers and soldiers believe the war against the Islamic Armed Group is far from over.

In Egypt, the police have cut back the sugar cane fields to deny cover to their armed opponents. In Lebanon, the Israelis routinely smashed orchard walls for the same reason. But here, in the soft plain of the

Mitidja, the Algerian army have cut down the trees. And so it is that the scent of burning pine drifts over the landscape, perfuming the killing fields alongside the roads to Sidi Moussa and Benthalha.

Algerian troops are on every laneway now, at checkpoints every half mile, helmeted and flak-jacketed and wearing the sand-coloured camouflage dress of the southern deserts. And at the edge of the slaughtered townships, you can find the ministry of interior's 'Patriots', the government-armed villagers who stare sullenly at our little convoy, bejeaned and T-shirted, Kalashnikov rifles over their shoulders, running shoes on their feet. They do not want their pictures taken - and who can blame them? Who wants their picture on French television when the Islamic Armed Group (GIA) is known to make videos of news broadcasts to identify possible targets. And so the survivors of the villages are

as frightened of the future as they are horrified by the past. Most of the people of Benthalha fled after the massacre last month. A few hundred drift back in the mornings; I found two trying to repair the blackened interior of their homes, ignoring my questions while a group of children - who had hidden on the roof during the massacre - watched in silence. Another man refused to name his dead wife. "Her name belongs to me," he said, and began to cry.

The pathetic remnants of the families evoke something beyond pity. In each kitchen, the cheap metal trays have been twisted out of recognition, the pots smashed, medicines thrown over the floor. A pile of school books in a garage next to three huge pools of congealed blood showed how earnestly its dead owner had tried - amid the immense poverty of the Algiers slum suburbs - to improve his lot. The first page of the boy's exercise book

shows his name was Khoreichi; he had practised his declensions and written the biography of his doomed family: "Abdelkader is my father, he is an electrician. Zhor is my mother, she is a dressmaker. Hamid is my uncle, he is a policeman. Sal-

BY ROBERT
FISK

ima is my aunt, she is a nurse ..." I wondered whether Hamid's job might have sent the family to their deaths. But the survivors said there was no discrimination. One man said he heard the gunmen who entered the village last month shouting that their enemies were Jews.

A man who pleaded with me not to publish his name said he saw the poorer families of Benthalha seeking refuge in a large house in Hijiili street. "It was no good for them," he said. "I stood here at the window and I could hear those poor people screaming and crying. When I looked out of my window, I could see them axing the women on the roof." At least 17 people died in that house alone. In one corner of it, I discovered a book of European art and another on modern Algerian history. Several pages depicted the features of dead martyrs of the 1954-62 independence war against France, their faces disfigured by bullets and shrapnel. How little Algeria's suffering had changed.

Nor is it likely to be reduced in the coming months. For while Algeria's Popular Liberation Army - the military descendants of the old FLN guerrilla force - have apparently surrounded two GIA units in the

forests of the Mitidja, discovering caches of arms and heaps of documentation, their officers are warning of a long and hard war to come. Their views are in sharp contrast to those of the government in Algiers whose repeated reassurances that "terrorism" - the authorities' definition of all armed opponents - is all but crushed.

On 20 August, just two days before the massacre of 349 villagers at Rais, President Liamine Zeroual announced that "terrorism is living its last hours in our country." Violent acts were to be regarded as "residual terrorism".

In the daily *Le Matin*, however, a senior army officer involved in the siege of a GIA village of Ouled Allal - allegedly a GIA stronghold - has criticised what he calls "triumphalist talk about the death of terrorism". The GIA, he said, could still strike, adding grimly that "the killers are still hiding amid the shadows".

Samaritans held to ransom in battle for survival

Two years ago, ancient scrolls of the Samaritans - the tiny community which claims descent from the ancient Kingdom of Israel - were stolen. The thieves want \$1m for their return. Patrick Cockburn in Jerusalem says the theft has exacerbated the sense of vulnerability of the 2,500-year-old sect.

It is two years since three thieves broke down the door of the Samaritans' synagogue in Nablus in the West Bank, crossed the carpeted prayer hall and pushed aside a purple curtain concealing the altar, the Holy of Holies. From inside an ornamental wooden cabinet they stole a 700-year-old scroll of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, and a codex of similar age written on parchment bound in red covers. The theft is a blow which still reverberates through a community known to the world largely through the parable of "the good Samaritan", in which Jesus chose a member of a sect which the Jews detested as an example of selfless love. For 2,500 years, Samaritans have lived on the edge of extinction, but they are always

conscious of their historic role. "After the death of King Solomon there was a split," says Abd Mo'in Sadaqa, a Samaritan priest. "We formed the Kingdom of Israel and the Jews the Kingdom of Judah."

They speak ancient Hebrew, believe Moses was the only prophet and accept only the first five books of the Bible. Their identity is also bound with a place - Mount Gerizim, the stony mountain which towers above Nablus on the West Bank. The Samaritans believe it was here, not Jerusalem, that Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. "We do not believe in Jerusalem," said Abd-Moin Sadaqa.

There are just 583 Samaritans in the world, divided between Mount Gerizim and Holon, south of Tel Aviv. In 1917, there were only 146. Binyamin Tsekada, editor of their newspaper, *A.B. (Aleph-Bet)*, says however few they are, they still have their own language, history and culture. Each year at Passover, the entire community gathers on Mount Gerizim to sacrifice sheep in a ritual similar to that of the ancient Jews. But the Samaritans also feel acutely vulnerable and the theft of their Torahs in March 1995 has exacerbated this sense of fragility. In the last century, impoverished Samaritans often sold



Holy place: Samaritans on Mount Gerizim, near Nablus. The world population of the sect is just 583

Photograph: Varda Pollak-Sahm

manuscripts, the number of which shrank from about 4,000 to only 35. Mr Tsekada says those that remain are "a symbol of the existence of our community".

Ever since the theft, the Samaritans have been trying to

enlist the help of Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader who now rules Nablus as an independent Palestinian enclave. The Samaritans are the only quasi-Jewish community under his control and he is eager to show his tolerance. They have also

sought the assistance of the US State Department, the Foreign Office, and King Hussein of Jordan.

The scroll and the codex are safe but the thieves have taken them to Jordan. Their original demand was for \$7m,

though this was reduced to \$1m. Radwan Afif Samri, an official in the Palestinian Social Welfare Ministry, who first had contact with the thieves, says: "I went to the Grand Hotel in Amman and waited until 12 o'clock at night. They sent

us a man in a car who showed us a box. When I opened it there were the scrolls."

The Samaritans says they do not have that kind of money. Binyamin Tsekada says their remaining manuscripts have now all been moved to their syna-

agogue in their settlement, Kiryat Luza, on Mount Gerizim. The Samaritans add that, fortunately, the thieves who broke into the synagogue discarded the metal case holding the Torah scroll which was made in 1571 and is worth millions of dollars.

The last contact with the thieves when they reduced their demand to \$1m was in Amman this September. The Samaritans were again shown the scrolls, though they noticed that fragments had fallen off.

The Samaritan leaders stress how helpful everybody has been. Mr Samri says Mr Arafat is "always searching for the good of the Samaritans". When their shops were attacked during the Palestinian Intifada - they have since largely moved from Nablus to Mount Gerizim - he paid for the damage.

But beneath these protestations of gratitude there is a sense of fear, deep but unexpressed. Most of the Samaritans in Gerizim carry Jordanian passports; those in Holon have Israeli passports and serve in the Israeli army.

Mr Samri says: "We are a small community; we have seen many governments; we keep out of politics." But the Samaritans may find such neutrality difficult in a land where Israel and the Palestinians fight for every stone.

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مكتبة من الادب

Bomber Harris was unfairly blamed for terror raids

Germany, Sir Arthur Bomber Harris is seen as a war criminal. But evidence pieced together by an eminent historian suggests Harris was unfairly reviled and that another air chief was the real force behind saturation attacks on German civilian targets.

A single pink carnation had been placed last week at the foot of the statue of "Bomber Harris".

The bronze figure stands defiantly down the Strand, a hero to some but to many others a lasting symbol of Britain's acknowledgement that, yes, we too may have behaved badly in the Second World War.

When the statue was unveiled five years ago, it was promptly daubed with bloody

the war. The papers show that Portal had framed the morale-crushing strategy as early as June 1941, eight months before Harris even came to Bomber Command.

In a "Bombing Policy Report" drafted for the prime minister, he writes: "The most vulnerable point in the German nation at war is the morale of her civilian population under air attack ..."

He suggests that "preference be given to objectives in Germany so situated that bombs which miss their precise target nevertheless directly affect the morale of the German civilian population."

Three months later he is even more adamant that civilian morale is the key German weak spot.

He writes: "There is a large and growing body of opinion to the effect that by keeping as many Germans as possible out of bed for as long as possible every night we shall achieve far greater morale effect and not much less material effect than by attempting concentrated attacks with the primary object of material destruction."

Professor Overy said: "There's no doubt that Portal's view of bombing is that the critical thing is that it kills people and destroys their houses and, in some unspecified way, the war-willingness of the population ... Portal had this stereotypical view of the Germans that they were bullies and if you punch a bully on the nose he stops fighting."

By April 1942, a few weeks after Harris had taken up his position, Portal had coined a new description for the bombing strategy - "Concentration" - a reference to the Luftwaffe's devastating raids on Coventry in 1940.

Portal writes: "It was suggested at today's Cabinet that we should make a list of about 25 towns in Germany suitable for Concentration and that this list should be published by the BBC so as to cause alarm and despondency ..."

In the same document, Por-



tal notes that he has spoken to Harris, who is "averse" to such scare tactics.

Harris believed that discipline in Germany was such that threats of this nature would not effect morale. By November 1942, Portal was drawing up potential casualty figures, for a stepped-up bombing campaign during 1943 and 1944, in a way that Professor Overy described as "chilling".

The predicted results would include "the destruction of 6 million German dwellings ... 25 million Germans rendered homeless ... an additional 60 million 'incidents' of bomb damage to houses ... civilian casualties estimated at about 900,000 killed and 1,000,000 seriously injured".

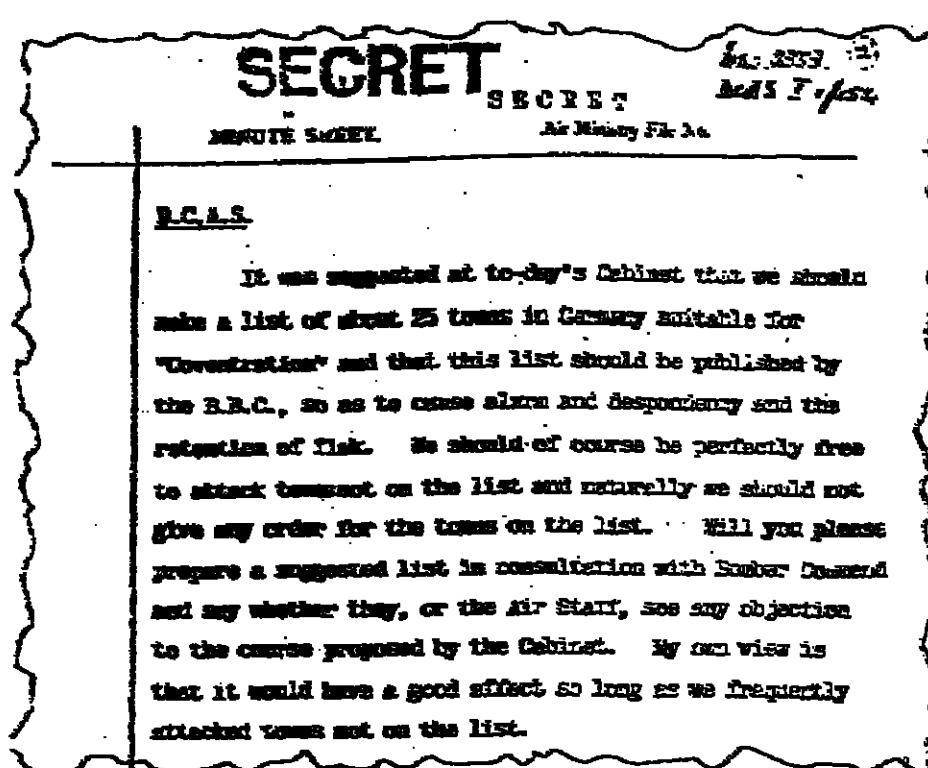
He goes on: "If the attacks were spread over the main urban areas the result would be to render homeless three-quarters of the inhabitants of all German towns with a population of over 50,000."

A highly respected administrator with an acute mind, Portal was one of the few people Churchill would take trouble to listen to.

Hands-on and public-school educated, he was also highly regarded by the American air chiefs.

By contrast, Harris was a brusque career airman who had no time for those who disagreed with him.

According to Professor Overy, he "was a man of strong



Off the hook: The statue of Sir Arthur Harris in the Strand, London, and part of the "Bombing Policy Report" that Sir Charles Portal, chief of British air staff, drafted in 1942, suggesting the terror-bombing campaign usually associated with Harris, head of Bomber Command, for which he has been described by some as a war criminal

views, which bordered at times on sheer prejudice."

He was also "terse, businesslike, immensely hard-working and single-minded to a degree".

When his statue was controversially unveiled by the Queen Mother in 1992, some 200 peace protesters tried to disrupt the ceremony and sprayed paint on onlookers. The statue was later daubed with the word "Shame".

By 1944, Harris was still stressing that the role of the heavy-bomber force was "the destruction of the enemy's industrial centres".

Professor Overy said: "Harris himself always thought his job was not to attack morale as a primary objective but to destroy the industrial centres of Germany."

But Portal insisted on the morale-based strategy to the last. In April 1945, when it was

being argued that German towns should not be unnecessarily destroyed, as facilities were needed by advancing Allied forces and for reconstruction, Portal overruled the claims.

"Any ultimate political or economic disadvantages of area bombing necessitated by these operations should be accepted," he said.

Professor Overy, whose views are expressed in a new book, *Bomber Command 1939-45*, published yesterday, said: "Portal is consistent with his views right through to the end of the war that area bombing, causing high civilian casualties and destruction of housing, was what was needed."

But Professor Overy said that, despite Portal's directives, the single-minded Harris still managed to steer his own path.

The result was that, while Harris was well aware there

would be huge casualties from his bombing missions, fewer people died than might have been the case had the Portal strategy been fully implemented. And the war, Professor Overy argues, was successfully brought to an earlier conclusion.

"It was much more successful than people have been able to accept; this was Britain, a liberal democracy, slaughtering large numbers of Germans in a ghastly way. There is no doubt that people at that time and now felt it was immoral. But the bombing turned out to be a critical factor in limiting Germany's war capability in the last years of the war," he said.

"People in Germany are starting to talk about the bombings as war crimes in the same breath as the Holocaust or the atrocities on the Eastern Front. Getting the record straight is more important than ever."

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Necessity,

Solar power – state of the art in a land not especially famous for its sun

Nobody doubts the virtues of harnessing solar power. But the technology and design was ugly and clunky. What we see here, from British designers, is visionary and exciting. Norie Niesewand feels the heat of the sun

The world's largest solar-powered canopy – as big as two hockey fields – will be revealed in Yorkshire at the new Earth Centre, opening in summer 1998.

A British engineer, Tom Barker, hit on the notion of sun-shades powered by solar energy in a competition to design harbour gardens in Osaka, Japan. More than just a bright idea, it proves that solar panels are getting flexible and can be used on fabric.

Another world first, the world's choicest three-storeyed condominiums track the sun to store it for household use in a design by the British designer Ross Lovegrove. It will cost no more than a motorboat.

There are still only five households in Britain that solely use solar energy to power their houses. One in Nottingham and one in Oxford, both owned by architects, and the other three, terraced houses completed this summer by Greenpeace at Silvertown in London's Docklands.

So all this designer energy which shows the sun hasn't set on British ingenuity is good news.

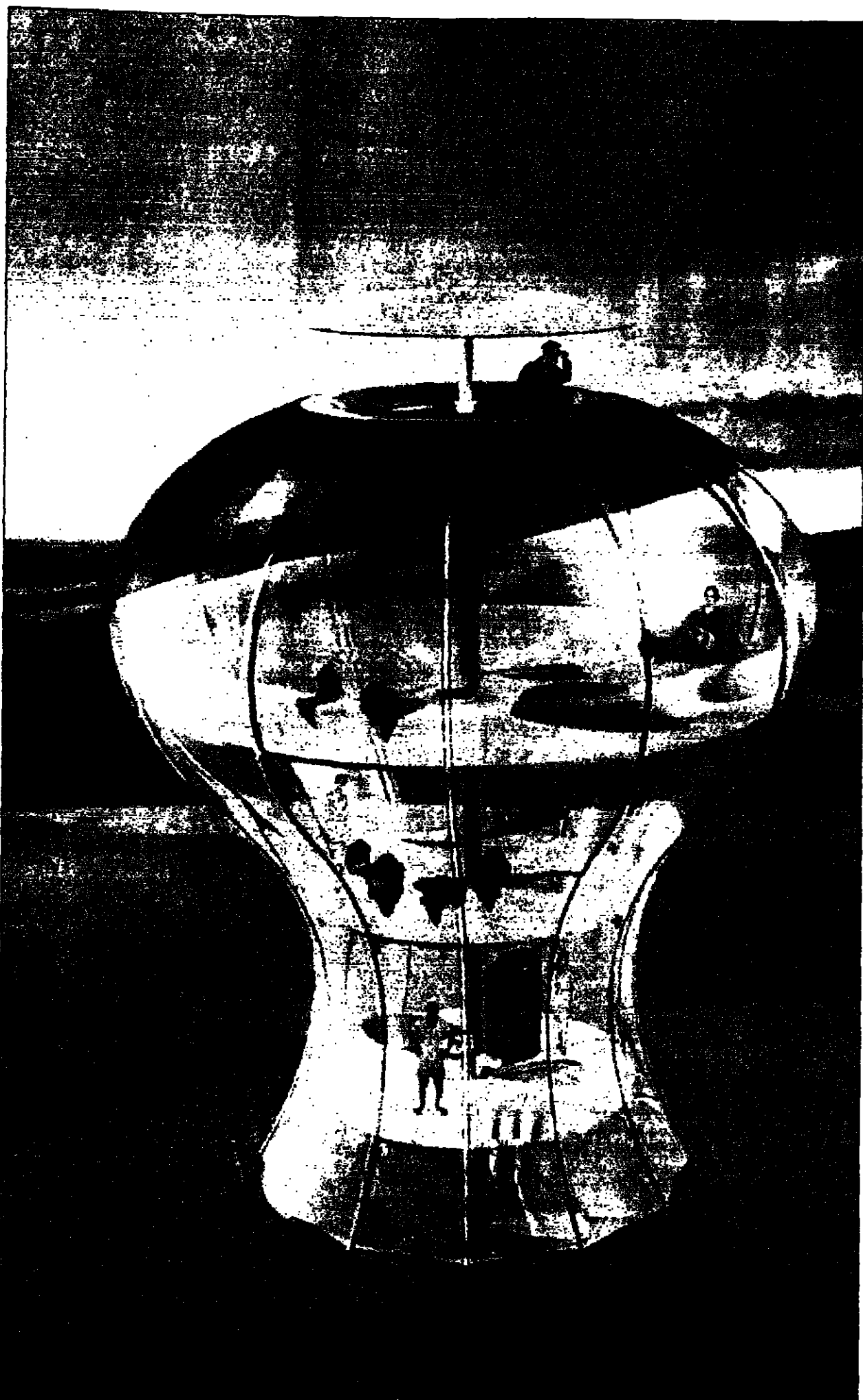
World oil consumption levels are up to the peak late Seventies all-time highs. That was the last time designers learnt to harness the sun, in photovoltaic panels on the roof to store the sun and convert it into electricity or through solar radiation, warm the water.

One of the disheartening things about solar energy used to be that it was technologically clunky and complicated. You had to buy an array of gigantic solar panels that glinted on the roof. They had to be angled just so to catch the sun. Solar houses always look like Swiss chalets with high pitched A-line roofs and deep overhangs and who wants to live in a Berni Inn? Or else you had Heath Robinson wires and solar panels stuck on telegraph poles to try to power the telephone from solar energy. No longer!

The solar race between the big companies is just beginning.

BP in Britain, which has always kept its 'Solar Power Division' as evidence that it sees the energy issue as wider than oil consumption, is now taking a big interest. John Brown, its Chief Executive, says that he wants BP solar to move from an annual turnover of about \$10m to, within 10 years, \$1bn.

Brown says that he is confident they can make solar costs competitive across the planet in a decade. What he needs is the UK government support to sponsor solar energy consumption with upfront capital and longer market entry mechanisms to encourage more users. The United States government has encouraged this with interest-free loans, reversible metering and spending a lot on solar energy on their own buildings.



Ross Lovegrove's three-storey house of the future

PVC, light-driven and filled with ergon gas: meet your future home

Alternative living in the next century in a capsule like this could make you self-sufficient. A friendly little pod like a light-bulb, it is made of PVC, and filled with ergon gas which glows out by day and warms up by night. Lidded with a rotating photovoltaic panel that tracks the sun, it absorbs in silica wafers the maximum radiated heat from the sun to transfer it via a simple electronic current into battery storage below ground.

An aluminium mast roots the solar seed to the water supply – there is rain-water collection as well – and carries plumbing and cabling from the sunlight storage below ground to serve the three floors. The rooftop visor vents the place by day.

"It's spherical because we learn from the Earth that's the most efficient shape to maximise sunlight," says Ross Lovegrove, the man who came up with this remarkable vision.

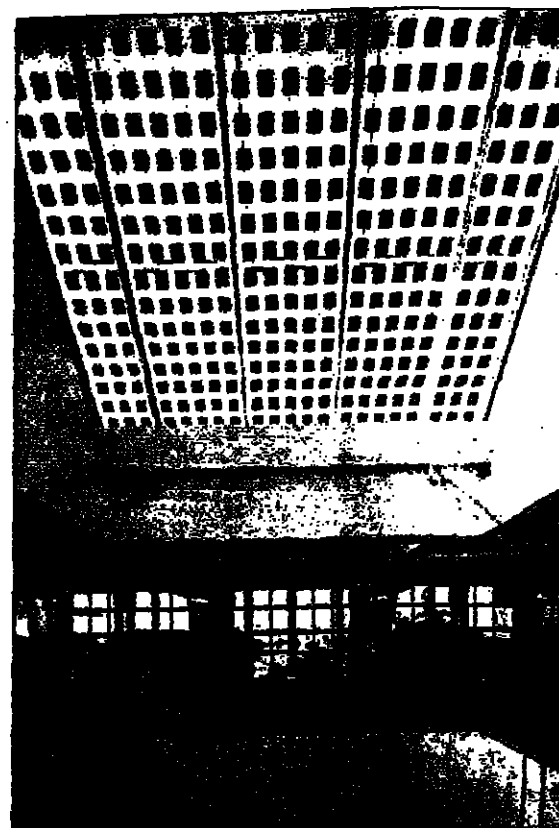
He knows that the PVC walls aren't considered environmentally friendly but the mixture of aluminium, carbon fibre, Kevlar and F board means that the structure will last a long time and that it will be more user-friendly than fossil fuel driven dinosaurs.

He's working on the project now with the Italian bathroom manufacturer, Guzzini Teuco. Lovegrove works for Mazda and Olympus, Apple and Sony, Herman Miller USA, Japan Airlines, Peugeot and Airbus Industries and Ital-

ian kitchen, bathroom, lighting and furniture manufacturers.

But the business of persuading manufacturers that mind-bending designs are do-able is not easy. He carries a Tote bag full of designer things with him to meetings – to show that his chair can have a flexible part where the rigid back meets the seat, he shakes a ski boot manufactured in injection moulded plastic at them.

When he took the glittery red car bumper light material and turned it into the toughest vacuum flask, called "Alfie", it became a bestseller. So if his track record is anything to go by this product will be in clusters on site somewhere near you in the near future.



Greenpeace's solar-panel-powered offices

Moving alternative energy into the mainstream: Greenpeace puts its case

In Greenpeace's solar-panelled offices, minds are of course much turned to sustainable energy and what Britain is not yet doing.

They will tell you that in Germany if you install solar-powered panels and manage to put back into the grid any excess energy, you get back 5p for every unit you save.

That sort of incentive is what Greenpeace wants to see, especially now that they know what they know about the three terraced houses they built at Silvertown in London's Docklands in conjunction with

the Peabody Trust.

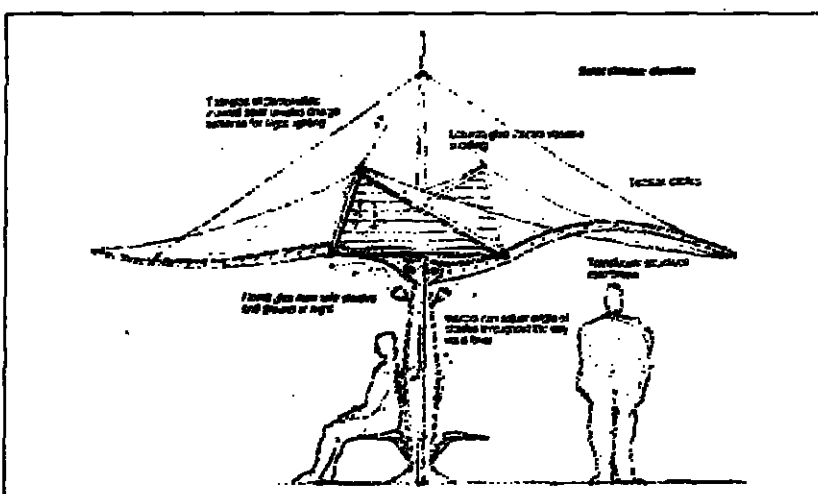
It cost around £6,000 per house to install the panels and as things stand they save around £60 annually on the fuel bill.

The payback period works out at 100 years. Even so, Marcus Rand, the Greenpeace director on Solar Challenge, is bullish about the prospects for solar energy.

He knows that it is the only future which is left to us. "By redirecting £17m which is currently spent on oil, coal and gas industries each year, Britain could have 50,000 solar homes by 2010."

In the meantime, Britons will be able to get inspiration from a source other than Greenpeace. The Earth Centre, which opens in Yorkshire next summer, is one of the first projects to receive lottery funds. It will have hands-on exhibitions for Green scientists and installations and studio tours to demonstrate the recovery of the Earth in the 21st century if solar power is more widely used. There will be prototypes of Millennium cities and a project called Waterworks, which will show you how to grow your own food chain in water.

A place in the sun – and in every other weather condition



Tom Barker's solar-paneled sunshades: creating enough energy to provide a cool or warm environment, and to drive lights by night

In an international competition to landscape a narrow harbour strip in Osaka, Japan, Tom Barker designed solar-paneled sunshades. About five metres across with a series of solar panels like triangles on each shade, they can store enough energy to warm the shelter in winter, drive lights by night, and power a fan by day to cool it down in summer. Then he de-

signed a tea-house which sits over the canal with ventilation systems and underground tubes that draw in air from inlets some 30 metres away to either heat or cool it. A wind turbine on the top ventilates the tea-house.

His "House of the Future", proposed for Wandsworth with the architects Richard Rogers Partnership, will have a wa-

ter-powered lift, solar panels and wind turbine, to make it the low-energy building of the next century. Reversing the overheated glass in midsummer syndrome, he plans to cool down the glass capsules for 16 people spinning around the Millennium Ferris Wheel on the Thames (if it ever gets off the ground) with BP solar panels on the roof to drive the fans inside.

Necessity, the mother of British modernism

An exhibition at the Fine Arts Society in London, 'Austerity to Affluence... British Art & Design 1945-62', proves not only that Britain could make it (the title of an exhibition at Heals in 1946) but that British designers were ahead of the modernists elsewhere.

There's more to modernism than being designer smart about shape. As the furniture designer Robin Day explains, in the foreword to the ex-

hibition catalogue (a collectors' item for the future): "We naïvely felt that modern town-planning and enlightened design of buildings and products would transform the environment and enhance the lives of the people."

Not so naïvely, as history shows. All over Britain, sitting comfortably in their Parker Knoll or Ercol chairs, with an amoeba-shaped coffee-table and its Formica top, Venetian blinds and Axminster carpets, New Towners faced a brave new world.

As the austerity and rationing of the war years lifted, a new style emerged in Britain. Wood was still rationed and because of the utility scheme, companies could produce

furniture only to government specification. It had to be cheap, use little wood bought in bulk, and make up for the lack of materials. So furniture slumped down, using skeletal steel rods for construction or aluminium off-cuts and honeycomb wood veneers from the aeroplane industry. Duckcloth from RAF seats was recycled as upholstery. Adhesives made for aeroplanes sandwiched veneers.

Objects were called by their serial numbers, in the machine-age tradition. But their quirky anthropomorphic forms meant they got called "Antelope", like the springy stacking chair by Ernest Race, with its painted steel frame, shown at the Fest-

tival of Britain, or the bouncy "Kangaroo", his rocking-chair commissioned for the roof terrace of the 1952 Time Life building in New Bond Street. He designed a slender dining-room suite called "Allegro", made from lightweight plywood developed during the War for aircraft construction. Post-war and into the Fifties, Italian designers did not have the same drive and commitment to produce everyday furniture at affordable prices. Nobody understood the concept behind modernism like the British.

"Our designers were anti-elitist", Geoff Rayner believes. After the Second World War, modernism in Italy became largely a matter

of showbiz prototypes; in Denmark it was one-offs or small batch production, beautifully crafted by cabinet workers; while Americans' modernism became power-dress office furniture by Eames and Frank Lloyd Wright, rather than everyday household items. Only Finland stuck to the industrial agenda with a social conscience by mass-producing Alvar Aalto furniture, lights and glass.

The cut-off date for this exhibition is 1962, when pop came in, and austerity changed to affluence. 'Austerity to Affluence... British Art & Design 1945-62' runs 20 October-14 November

Norie Niesewand

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DIRTY BRICK COULDN'T NO. 2

Hello Ken, welcome back to County Hall

Turn again Livingstone! It was 11 years since he had set foot in this room – his office when he was London's big cheese. Janie Laurence took him back and found him maturing nicely.

After 15 minutes' wait I'm beginning to fret that Ken Livingstone is not going to show for lunch. "I haven't set foot in that building since a foreign, alien power took over," he's told me earlier on the phone. One thing's for sure, if he's had a change of heart he won't call on my mobile to let me know. "I won't use them, can't stand them," he says abruptly when I try to give him the number. Alien powers, mobile phones. That's Ken. If he doesn't like something he's never been shy about letting us know.

Thankfully, he arrives, breathless and apologetic. There was never any chance of his not coming because there's a Chinese lunch on offer. And he would never miss that.

The restaurant is in what used to be a suite of rooms adjacent to his own when he was leader of the GLC. Ken hasn't set foot there for 11 years. They used to produce radical policies for the people; now they offer a splendid chicken in lemon sauce and are bedecked with chandeliers and red paper lanterns. From the window, a perfect view of Ken's current office, minutes from the House of Commons. But whereas during Ken's time politicians would look over to County Hall and see a large banner taunting them with London's latest unemployment figures, that's now been replaced by one advertising the aquarium.

It all seems so terribly long ago. In 1986 when the GLC was abolished Ken was a figure the

public loved to hate. He attracted hysterical tabloid headlines whenever he spoke.

To the fury of Michael Foot he issued a personal invitation to Sinn Féin leaders. Grants were awarded to groups such as the Lesbian Left. In such a flurry of antipathy his Fares Fair public transport policy is often forgotten. "I loved it," he recalls. "We were just ahead of our time. Is any one of those things I did not now mainstream politics?"

He looks around his old office – a wood panelled room with dangling bare light fittings. Doesn't it make him sentimental? "I only get sentimental about people, not buildings," he replies swiftly.

In 1987 he became MP for Brent East and for a while to some residents he was still Red Ken who couldn't guarantee their bins were emptied. Ten years on and he's reinvented himself. He's become Cuddly Ken. A spot of panto, a cheese advert, innumerable radio and chat show appearances. "It was a deliberate strategy. The best way to reach people is to be on Jimmy Young." Cuddly though is doubtless not the view of him in Millbank. No matter how fresh-faced assistants brief him, he will keep doing annoying things like banging on about raising taxes. He mentioned it at least five times to me. "I've always been cuddly," he says, patently not displeased by his change in fortune. "It wasn't my fault that the media depicted me as some Mandelsonian monster. Although I was more hated than he's ever been."

Since Livingstone beat Mandelson to a place on the NEC last month all sorts of unlikely people have been skulking up to Ken offering their congratulations. So what does Ken think of Mandelson? "He's very witty and very clever." How restrained. No, actually. You're right. Ken isn't averse to

a smidgen of *schadenfreude*. Well a dollop more like. It was an ecstatic-looking Ken caught on camera when the NEC result was announced. "Yes, the party official had just come over and said, 'You've pissed all over him.'" He guffaws. Ken is a supreme mischief-maker. He says he views politics as a game. Although it's often hard to gauge how serious the intent is behind the words.

His voice is even more nasal live. In a gruesome dark green shiny suite he looks like one of those door-to-door blokes who will do you a good deal on tea towels. Yet many women are rather attracted to Ken. In fact among my female friends, especially since he shaved off his moustache, he's got something of a following. What they would like to do to you is unprintable. I tease him. "No, print it, print it," he says, his already ruddy cheeks reddening with pleasure. He has, he says, always pre-

ferred the company of women. "I don't like pubs, I don't like smoking and I don't like sport so it's a bad start. And when you're with a group of men socially you tend to have a series of statements. Before someone is finished, somebody else is making another. All these men are competing to take the conversation into the area they want to go. So you come away thinking nobody listens. It's exhausting because it's like we're all strutting around with our feathers erect."

Politics was never part of his game plan. His childhood ambition was to be an astronaut. Lambeth not being the obvious recruiting centre for Apollo missions, instead he went to an all-boys school in Tulsa Hill. Even then his school reports gave some indication of what was to come. "They always said that I was disruptive or mixing with the wrong crowd. And if a teacher told me something

I knew was wrong I wouldn't give in. I challenged them."

After school he worked as a lab technician and then trained as a teacher. Elected to Lambeth Council he had by then "fallen in love" with politics. As a child money was tight so both his parents had day and evening jobs. "We never wanted for anything but it was a struggle." He was particularly close to his mother who died aged 82 in August this year.

"We recognised that she was fading away, then one night in the hospital she asked for a sherry and just passed away in her sleep." His dad died of a heart attack when he was 56. "No man ever lives long in my family," he announces breezily. Now 52, does he worry about the passage of time? "I swim three times a week," is all he says.

Too personal and the shutters come down. Like a true politician or your average man.

Take our conversation about children. Married at 26 and subsequently divorced eight years later he has been living with his partner Kate Allen, who works at the Refugee Council, for 16 years. I think he would be rather a sweet dad. Has he ever regretted not having children? "My ex-wife had a miscarriage a year before we split up so it wasn't a decision not to have them." That must have been horrible, I say. "Mmm," he replies in definitively male fashion before pursuing a sociological analysis of the drawbacks of the contemporary nuclear family in the West. Yes but what if Kate had wanted them? "If she had really wanted them then we'd have had them," he says.

He would really much prefer to tell me how much he loves his garden. Home to the most famous news in Britain. Why does he so love news? "It was a childhood interest." He also

enjoys going to the cinema. What was the last film he saw? "Oh I can't remember."

Ken is most in his element discussing figures. So many billion pounds for this could mean so many million for that and then if that billion was subtracted by that million. Glazing over, I really have to tell him, enough already. He's talking to a woman who still hasn't mastered percentages on a calculator. Ken, you see, actually years to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. Surely he would hate to be a minister? He would certainly have to toe the party line then. "If you accept the job you're stuck with that." Coming as it does hot on the heels of his assessment of the role of the Cabinet it seems unlikely he could. "It's now reduced to little more than a sounding board."

"But I like Blair – I never could stand Kinnock. You can say to Blair, 'I don't agree with

this,' and he doesn't pound the table or scream abuse. With Kinnock it was almost physical. I often used to think that he might lean over and headbutt you. He was appalling."

He may not become a minister but he's making a very public bid to become the new Mayor of London. Free entry to museums and art galleries, more bus lanes, a job creation scheme – he's already been pitching hard. "They'll probably have some special clause that men born in June 1945 are barred from standing," he says sardonically. As we leave we bump into a town crier who enthusiastically pledges his support. Ken excuses himself. These days he's always in a rush. "It was easier when I was reviled and marginalised – at least I knew what I was doing," he says. He doesn't mean it. Ken knows he's popular and he's enjoying every minute. Immensely.

I deal with my pain but I can't ignore it – why don't friends see that?

VIRGINIA IRONSIDE

I always remember when I was suffering over the death of my father and would try to describe how miserable I felt to friends. I would say that the night before I had cried all the time, that I could hardly operate, that I spent hours banging the walls and shouting, and yet, because I told them this in a matter-of-fact voice when I wasn't particularly upset, I had had the sense that they thought I was like a fisherman describing the one that had got away. "Sure she's miserable," I felt they were muttering, cynically. "She seems pretty OK now. It's just a plea for sympathy."

And it's true that unless you are actually screaming in emotional or physical agony bearing a doctor's certificate signed by the Lord Mayor, the Pope and the Queen, some people can't quite get it into their heads just how hellish life can be for people in pain.

Why is this? One is that if you're doing your best to be brave, a lot of people tend to take you at face value. If Christine only appears at social dos stuffed with Nurofen with a grin on her face, they feel this must be possible all the time. Some friends can also be very frightened of pain of any kind.

I once became very upset when in hospital because one of my best friends refused to visit or ring. She simply sent one postcard from abroad saying what a great time she was having. It was only when I realised that it was due to her huge fear of illness, and her tremendous dependence on me as a strong character, that I understood that she was probably more deserving of sympathy than myself and shouldn't be struck

from my address book.

The other reason some of Christine's friends may be unsympathetic is because back pain is rather like depression. Everyone has a twinge now and again and gets through it; everyone is low now and again and copes with it. When they hear the words "back pain" they automatically think it is something like the same as the pain they suffer and naturally are unsympathetic. They simply haven't got the imagination to realise that acute back pain is excruciating and can make you feel positively sick with agony.

And anyway, do we ourselves always believe our friends? Just think of how difficult it is for people who say they've been sexually abused to get themselves heard, let alone believed; and certainly friends of mine have declared themselves supremely happy and yet I have been certain that I see a pain in the back of their eyes that betrays their verdict.

What can Christine do? She may find that discovering another name for her back pain would get her more sympathy. There are all kinds of back pain, and she could declare that her doctor says she is suffering from "ankylosing spondylitis", "sciatica", "osteoarthritis", "ruptured disc", or even "spinal-cord tumour" – or she could invent some weird piece of Greek or Latin gobbledegook to baffle her friends into believing that what she suffers from is truly serious.

Or she could, rather than put a brave face on it, collapse a couple of times in front of her friends, unable, say, to cross the road. Showing that she suffers could get far more understanding than just telling.

WHAT READERS SAY

Learn to like the new person you have become

I sympathise very much with Christine's hurt, physical and emotional, as I too suffer chronic pain, from RSI.

Chronic pain changes the personality, and this can be the hardest thing about it. Often, one doesn't recognise the person reflected back by the people one interacts with. Frankly, I think Christine's former friends don't like her any more. She is not the same person that they used to have fun with. Her challenge is to accept this, without liking herself any the less. In time, she can get to know and love her new self, and find friends who share the more limited pleasures that she is still capable of.

Joy may come less easily into her life, but compassion and serenity may grow to take its place.

Caroline Macafee
Aberdeen

Sometimes it is better to get rid of disbelieving friends

I sympathise absolutely with Christine. The essential thing is "to be believed". I speak from my own experience of a chronic chest condition. What, I imagine, Christine would like to hear is, "Yes, I do believe you," or words to that effect, and then the question, "How is it?"

If her friends appear not to believe her and they fail to make a genuine inquiry, she may well be better off without them. One way would be to write a letter stating, objectively, that her back pain truly is a problem and that she is doing all that she can about it even if "resetting it", if that is what is needed, may not seem a very positive thing. The letter could well go on to say that if she is not in touch for the time being she hopes, or trusts, that they understand.

This lack of belief on the part of some friends could perhaps be a factor in her back pain. One does not want "advice", but simply to be understood. If the friends simply refuse to understand she might well be better to end gently the contact. I have done this myself with two

disbelievers. After a while, not having disbelieving "friends" in mind is a relief.

Michael Guyer
London

Get support from others who face the same problem

I am bedridden with ME and for the first couple of years had severe difficulties with people not taking my illness seriously. There are no easy answers. You can try educating your friends, using leaflets or books about chronic pain, but ultimately it is up to them whether they face up to your situation. Whatever people think or say about you, it is important to hang on to your belief in yourself. I have found it invaluable to be in contact with others in a similar position, partly because I don't have to keep explaining or defending myself. Perhaps you might benefit from this as well?

Zoe Williams
Farrington, Oxon

You can still keep in touch without going out

I have had the same problem for the last two years and I have watched friends slowly disappear. I have managed to hold on to my closest friends by inviting them on a regular basis to my home for drinks. If you fully explain the problems, not simply "back pain" but "spinal damage", people are more sympathetic. The real answer I have found is to re-focus your life so that friends are not so important. I have done this by, for example, subscribing to magazines which are relevant to me. Every day brings a new interest which helps to alleviate the problem. I read two broadsheets in the morning and catch up on the other magazines and papers in the afternoon. I have found that by doing this my brain is kept very busy and active and when friends do come I have a lot to discuss and am no longer hurt by the people who have dropped me from their circuit and view.

ME Cole
Surrey

NEXT WEEK'S DILEMMA

I have been going out with John for two years now. Everything's fine, and my parents really like him, but for some reason his mother and stepfather refuse to meet me. I can think of no reason. I don't have a police record, or anything. I'm just an ordinary student, though I come from a working-class background, unlike John. I have been barred from Christmas and weddings, and have met John's mother only once, when she could hardly bear to shake my hand. John won't really say why they won't meet me, and I am starting to hate them, particularly as I know

the rest of the family, his brothers and sisters, and they are all extremely friendly. Why is she like this, and what can I do?

Any

Letters are welcome, and everyone who has a suggestion quoted will be sent a bouquet from Interflora. Send personal experiences or comments to me at the Features Department, 'The Independent', 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL (fax 0171-293 2182) by Tuesday morning.

If you have any dilemma of your own that you would like to share, please let me know.



Christopher Lee
will be at Harrods on Saturday

Christopher Lee will be signing copies of his autobiography

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A reminder to ministers: all children have special needs



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Classroom teaching can never just be about a child's intellectual development. Attainment depends mightily on children's health and happiness.

But teachers are not care assistants, nurses or social workers. They should have enough on their plates stretching and testing young minds; not all of them are up to that. There will, moreover, always be a category of pupil that demands too much attention - too much, that is, for the good of the other children. The test must always be the performance of the whole class. The Government is right in its central assertion, that teaching those with "special needs" in the company of their peers can enrich classroom life. But in its latest thoughts, published yesterday, it does not perhaps recognise, as acutely as teachers and parents do, that must be strict limits to a policy of integration. There comes a point, not usually with those with physical disabilities, when the presence of certain children in the classroom is educationally

disruptive. It is the teachers and heads, in conjunction with the parents of other children, who must make the call - not education bureaucrats or government ministers. Schooling those disruptive children must continue, to be sure, but elsewhere. We will always need special provision outside ordinary schools.

Because he is blind, David Blunkett possesses deep insight into special needs education. The pun is intentional. He knows at first hand how being defined by your disability is disabling. It is not political correctness to reserve blanket categorisations such as "the deaf" or "the mentally handicapped" and object to the educational apartheid they have endured in the past. Physical and mental disability is part of life; children who lack mobility or the use of one faculty can and must share the educational opportunities of their peers. As a rule, inclusion has to be the right policy - provided schools are physically adapted, teachers are given the necessary extra training, and their numbers

are boosted.

Then there are children who are emotionally disturbed. This is not necessarily a life's fate: children move in and out of conditions that impede their educational progress. The Green Paper is right to seek to cut the bureaucratic jungle that has grown up around the process of "statementing" - identifying and labelling children with difficulties. But the administrative challenge is to ensure that such children can be provided for, if necessary out of the mainstream, and preferably temporarily.

The Government's inclusive vision for the schools parallels its thinking about social exclusion, and the imperative of pushing and pulling the workless into jobs, and inhabitants of run-down estates back into the social swim. But, as with social exclusion, it needs to recognise two great problems. The first is money. David Blunkett acknowledged yesterday that he is not going to get far without putting "real re-

sources" behind these initiatives; but will he and his colleagues spell out when? Labour's commitment to Tory spending targets lasts until April 1999. Then what?

The second problem is machinery. Labour has, so far, broadly followed the Tory line on local education authorities: replace them where necessary, and generally prefer that the schools run their own show. But when it comes to providing for special educational needs, the backstop local authority has to have resources and show imagination. Children with special needs cannot be left to schools alone. The Green Paper, intriguingly, suggests that government regional offices (which currently have no educational responsibilities) might become involved. Most parents will be indifferent to who provides, as long as the specialist teaching is there. And that has to include separate schools with bodies of dedicated, specialist teachers.

For once Nigel de Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of

Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers, talks sense when he argues that mainstream classrooms must be protected from that (small) category of children whose behaviour problems are disruptive. They must, as a result, be found places in dedicated special schools.

Of course, that is a palliative. In the long run some broad-gauge social strategy would identify children pre-school as potentially problematic, not in order to stigmatise them, but to enable preventive action - Head-Start programmes, in other words. We now have a reasonable idea of what works if those children are not to become candidates for criminal careers before becoming the fathers and mothers of a new generation of problem children. But getting all the levers pulled at the right time poses a supreme challenge to the Government. David Blunkett's appearing alone at the launch of his Green Paper, talking airily about wider social issues, was a bad augury.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number. Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

Briefer bites back

Sir: Anthony Bevin (Comment, 21 October) lays waste to government press officers with the gay abandon of Attila the Hun, calling the Government Information Service (GIS) "a waste of time, space and cash".

I am a supporter of the GIS, but not an uncritical one. It has some weaknesses. We have been addressing them.

In the last few years we have improved our recruitment procedures and sought higher standards while the impositions on staff have increased as media outlets grow by leaps and bounds.

So what are the "whinges" from press officers? Precious few. There are natural concerns about the future, not because of a jobsworth mentality but from a challenge to professionalism. Is the service to ministers good enough, how do we mesh with Alastair Campbell, (who has praised with good grace many of our efforts) are government policies understood by the media, and how can we do more within the confines of the Civil Service Code?

Hurting over the battlefield, Tony prays in aid a *Daily Telegraph* leader, claiming that we refuse to leak stories, don't reply to journalists promptly, feel queasy at spin and leave at 5pm. The fundamental flaw in all this is to treat taxpayer-funded information officers as an independent force, accountable to no one save the journalists searching for exclusives.

No press officer will act independently of ministerial wishes. We owe a duty of loyalty to the government of the day. Do we hold on to precious information out of vainglorious feelings of power? Rubbish. We ask ministers what they wish us to say bearing in mind their duty to Parliament. Spin? Journalists rely on information officers to deal in facts, to explain policy and to ensure that credibility is never put at issue. We try to make it interesting to gain the attention of the fickle, impatient and imperfect filter of the free media. We don't complain about it; it's a fact of life and a challenge many of us relish. And there is always a press officer on duty out of office hours.

What is our output? In my own department since the election we have dealt with more



than 400 press releases; 100-plus newspaper articles; more than 350 ministerial interviews; the Government's first White Paper and many other policy documents; dozens of press briefings. And also answered more than 50,000 telephone calls. I am sure this effort is matched elsewhere in Whitehall.

JONATHAN HASLAM
Director of Communications
Department for Education and Employment
London SW1

Animal testing

Sir: I looked at the front page of *The Independent* this morning (21 October) and was horrified. The sight of a laboratory rabbit's red, irritated eye, discharging down its face sent a cold shiver down my spine.

Why should animals be subjected to such torture and abuse? Because they are not humans?

Because they do not speak our language? Because they do not own houses? Because they are not big enough to stop these people? Just because we know not what they think, it does not mean that they do not think or feel anything.

There are enough cosmetics on this earth, but if these cosmetic companies wish to make more and test them, they should test them on themselves. Small animals such as guinea pigs and rabbits can do nothing against us, so we should not take advantage of them.

RYAN PENFOLD
(aged 12)
Hemel Hempstead,
Hertfordshire

Sir: I congratulate you on an impressive front-page report (21 October) on the apparent weakening of Labour's position on animal experimentation.

The Home Secretary has, however, accepted all the recommendations of the Animal Procedures Committee.

Labour's pre-election pledges were somewhat more visionary than the consensus recommendations of the advisory committee the minister inherited. The Government also inherited the cut in the "alternatives research" budget. No doubt it will substantially increase this sum in the next Budget round.

The issue of an outright ban on cosmetics testing is complicated by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. If we were to ban the use of animals here we could not ban the import of animal-tested cosmetics from abroad. That is not an excuse, just a fact. Since Labour came to government no licences have been issued for cosmetic, tobacco or alcohol tests, nor are animals being used in Britain for weapons testing.

We all look forward to a

world where we do not use animals in painful experiments. The real test of this government will be its performance on the European and international stage. Until Britain takes the very modest step of ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Animal Experimentation it will be very difficult for us to claim the moral high ground.

CINDY MILBURN
UK Director
International Fund for Animal Welfare
Crowborough, East Sussex

Sir: A sense of proportion is needed, and some background knowledge helps.

It is entirely appropriate for Robert Fisk to remind us of the horrors in Algeria. It is the duty of a good paper to put that report on its front page (22 October). It is entirely inappropriate and, worse, ignorant, to give front-page status to the use

of 2,800 rabbits, guinea pigs and rats for testing cosmetics (21 October).

What is striking to a medical scientist is how few animals are being used. At the outside, 2,800 animals means that only 280 substances are being tested, more likely something nearer 23. Extraordinarily few substances are being tested on animals. If you suffer from allergies, and as many as one in ten of us do, you would be very grateful to know that the soaps or creams that you put on your skin are tested, and in the last analysis testing on animals gives a higher degree of confidence than tests in tubes.

In Holland the anti-vivisection movement puts its money into a Dutch Platform for Alternatives to Animal Testing. Anti-vivisectionists here would do well to do the same rather than expecting us, through taxation, to pay for their guilt trips.

Dr MARTIN ROSENDAAL
London NW5

Tobacco attack

Sir: When will the tobacco industry give up parroting its line that passive smoking does no harm to anyone (letter, 20 October)?

For as many as 80 per cent of the UK's 3.4m people with asthma, other people's cigarette smoke is a major cause of asthma attacks.

The debate about passive smoking has tended to focus on its long-term effects. Although these are undoubtedly significant, the tobacco industry can, as a result, engage in often esoteric discussion about the levels of proof required.

Light up a cigarette in front of a person with asthma and the proof will be there before your eyes.

MELINDA LETTS
Chief Executive
National Asthma Campaign
London N1

In black and white

Sir: For several years I have used, and paid the licence fee for, a black-and-white television set. Today I received a communication from the TV Licensing Office which asks me to confirm, by filling in a form and posting it, that I have not acquired a colour set or a video recorder; this is supposed to enable the office to "update their records".

I am a busy working person and, I hope, an honest citizen; I find it at best irritating and at worst sinister that I am apparently required to take the time to confirm that I am not breaking the law.

Ms B S PURCELL
Norwich

Refugees at Dover

Sir: Is not the influx of refugees from Eastern Europe to Dover simply the consequence of the present government's adoption of a previous Conservative policy - that of failing to fulfil the pledge of free movement of persons in the Single European Act?

These refugees can cross the European Union because they are in transit to the British internal immigration control at Dover. If there was no such control they would not get past the European Union control between Germany and the Czech Republic.

The Rev PETER M HAWKINS
Peterborough,
Cambridgeshire

Strange influence

Sir: Patrick Cockburn ("Yemen points finger at Saudis over kidnappings", 21 October) reports claims that the Saudi government managed, from Riyadh, to persuade a tribe in the mountains of Yemen to kidnap a gentleman from Britain to destabilise the government in Sana'a. He doesn't present a shred of evidence, not even the conversation with the proverbial taxi driver. However, I feel it to be my duty to express my admiration for your reporter's touching faith in my government's supernatural abilities.

GHAZI ALGOSAIBI
Ambassador
Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia
London W1

I have nothing to declare but my disappointment at this grim portrayal of a funny man



MILES KINGSTON

Recently, while staying with relations near Toronto, I was forced to go and see Niagara Falls, the sensational spot at which water from Canada falls into the United States, which seems to be set at a slightly lower level. The only prior impressions I had gained of this awe-inspiring sight came from accounts given by two famous people who were both, oddly enough, homosexual visitors of the 19th century.

One was Tchaikovsky, who tells his diary that he tried to pick some wild flowers but had his ear chewed off for it by some early environmentalist, and who also made some surprisingly anti-Semitic remarks about the tradesmen who, even

then, ruined the place.

The other was Oscar Wilde, who was more light-hearted about it, as you might imagine. He said that Niagara was the first major disappointment in a series of disappointments in the American marriage. Somebody asked him if it were not amazing that 80,000,000 gallons of water fell over the falls every minute, or some such figure. Oscar smartly replied that it would be amazing if they didn't.

Now, that is the Oscar Wilde I like to remember, the man who sparkled and twinkled and made men laugh, not the man trailing aesthetic theories or the self-created martyr. I would like to see a

film made about Oscar Wilde which stopped somewhere before the debacle - a film about his time in America, perhaps - but I will never see such a film, because the whole point of Oscar Wilde now is seen as the final tragedy, the martyrdom, the victimisation, the crucifixion without the resurrection. The fact that it was no such thing is seldom mentioned. Quentin Crisp is one of the few clear-sighted enough to see it.

"Mr Wilde floundered between sordidness and an almost fatuous conception of beauty. He festooned the dung-heap on which he had placed himself with sonnets as people grow honeysuckle round out-

door privies... He need never have brought any legal action. He could have feigned to be above confession and denial. Of his friends some would have known that he was queer; some would not - would have been impossible to convince. All imploring him to go abroad for a time, Mr Wilde took no one's advice. He stayed because he was a spiteful man and also because he couldn't bear to leave the stage...."

That was written in 1975 and suggests that Mr Crisp does not approve of Mr Wilde. This is perhaps odd, in that the two of them had exactly the same career, except back to front. Wilde soared into fame and fortune, then fell into

spectacular disgrace because of his sexual nature and ended up in penury and ignominy abroad. Crisp spent the first half of his life in obscurity, being spat at in the street for his wilful homosexual display, then fell out of disgrace, acquired celebrity, and was forced to flee to America to embrace fame.

But even now he has still not lost his distaste for Oscar. Here is what he says about it on page 222 of *Resident Alien* (published by HarperCollins, 1996): "I was questioned by Mr Evans about Mr Wilde. When it transpired that I heartily disliked Mr Wilde, Mr Evans was nonplussed. 'You have taken the wind out of my sails,' he cried. I offered to put it back

but he declined.

"The thing that I deplore about Mr Wilde was that he never came to grips with how sordid his life had become. When the names of five or six boys whom Mr Wilde knew only in Braille (they were procured by Lord Alfred Douglas and met Mr Wilde in darkened rooms in Oxford) he was still bleating about love and invoking the fair name of Mr Plato, who died a Greek philosopher and came back as a spinster's alibi.

"Someone compared him with Gore Vidal, which I found strange. Mr Wilde was a gross human being trying to enter English society. Mr Vidal is an elegant American trying to

get out of society. Mr Wilde once said that there was only one thing worse than being talked about and that was not being talked about. He was a sort of male version of Madonna. All this discourse took place with us sitting on a small raised dais facing inward, in the middle of a restaurant full of respectable, middle-aged ladies eating toast and sipping tea. For incongruity, the situation certainly took a lot of beating."

Still, not quite as incongruous, perhaps, as the way Oscar Wilde is now being portrayed as a hero and martyr instead of the man who flew, transfixed by the glare of his own publicity, towards his own ruin.

Never mine
is a serious



Never mind the jokes, fat is a serious issue



RUPERT CORNWELL
EAT, DRINK AND
AVOID THE RESULTS

Our first reaction is to laugh. Take yesterday's news from Brasilia, deemed wacky enough to have the announcers snickering on the *Today* programme. Fat people in the Brazilian capital, it transpires, will soon have specially reserved, extra wide seats in theatres and buses. "My father in law for instance hasn't gone to the theatre for 20 years," explained the city councillor who sponsored the measure, "because it's too uncomfortable and he was too embarrassed."

Serves the fellow right, too, we in the large (but diminishing) majority of the girth-unchallenged will mutter - before adding that people are to be permitted to spread themselves over an entire row in the bus or a couple of stalls seats in a sold out theatre, then just make sure they pay double whack for the privilege. After all do we not agree with America's latest guru, Michael Fumento? Enough of this culture of victimisation, self-pity, and attendant politically correct nonsense. There's nothing that half an hour's exercise each day won't put right. Obesity is simply a health problem bred of over indulgence, which any individual can cure if he puts his mind to it.

Would that it were. Consider a couple of other news items of late - the tragedy of young Kelly Yeomans who took her own life after school bullies tormented her for being fat and frumpy; or the equally self-inflicted death this week of a 30-year-old woman of anorexia, end result of a dieting pact with her sister after they had been dubbed the "fat twins" when they were not even teenagers. No one could accuse Samantha and Michaela Kendall of not putting their mind to it. Laugh-ter can be a pretty cheap shot.

The fact is that fatness is a product of our age as much as a single person's character flaws. Maybe it can in most cases be remedied with self discipline and restraint - but then so can most other of today's addictions. There are those who presumably enjoy being fat or even grossly fat, much as other people relish smoking two packs of cigarettes a day, or drinking ten pints of beer. At least as many however probably hate it. If not, why did Diet Coke with its quite repulsive flavour quickly capture 10 per cent of the US soft drinks market? Drinking Coke is great; but being thin is even better. Such is the ethos of our times. The word itself is clothed in euphemisms: robust, generously

proportioned, even - at a stretch - extra-large. But almost never fat.

And yet the condition is epidemic. America, of course, where on current trends half the population may be obese by the end of the century and 350,000 already die each year from diabetes, heart disease and other weight-related ailments. But let not Britain sneer at the land of the triple-Whopper, half-gallon soft drinks and suitcase-sized portions of popcorn. According to the World Health Organisation, no less than one in five of us is obese, three times as many as in the 1970s. Yes, we eat too much and exercise too little; the question, however, is less what has gone wrong, but why.

Overeating is direct product of the successes and failings of our industrial civilisation. Food, cheap and lots of it, is instantly and everywhere available, marketed by companies to whose financial advantage it is that we consume as much of the stuff as possible. And yet we are little the happier for it. We feel less in control of our lives than ever. Government, it seems, is no longer ultimately the province of flesh and blood politicians, with their regrettable but very human failings. Rather, we are just numbers and statistics in the hands of computers and disembodied corporations, mugs in a world where promise is always one tantalising step ahead of reality. Small wonder we seek consoling comforts like drugs, sex, alcohol, the national lottery - and, most easily obtainable of all, food.

Yes, it would be marvellous if we took ourselves in hand. Get ye behind me, chips and bacon butties and fat free Doritos. But as we all know, it ain't that easy. Failing an iron will, there is always hope that fashion's wheel will turn again, that somehow Renouir nudes will be restored as pin-ups of the age. In Samoa, after all, 75 per cent of women are obese and no less cherished for that. And what of the affection for Sumo wrestlers in Japan, land par excellence of the slender and petite?

But don't count on it. In the meantime, if Western society is to banish fatness from its midst, let it do so by looking to its strengths and not its weaknesses. Where we excel is technology, especially when a breakthrough can be worth billions. If we can clone sheep and land probes on Mars, then surely capitalism can find a cure for fatness.

The latest and most promising candidate for this elixir is a drug called Xenical, whose trick is to prevent our bodies absorbing the fat in the food we eat, instead of merely blunting the appetite as do most anti-obesity pills. Its maker, the Swiss drugs firm Hoffmann-La Roche who could earn \$700m a year in the US alone from Xenical, warns there are side effects, and vitamin supplements may be required. But unlike human nature, drugs can be perfected. This, logically, is where the future lies in the fight against obesity.

Ah, it will be protested, this is just a cop-out, a silver bullet for undeserving couch potatoes. But who objects to the use of nicotine patches to kick smoking, or the unceasing, hugely expensive quest for a cure for AIDS, both of them, like obesity, ailments of our times? And if such a drug had existed before, it might have saved not only embarrassment to the father in law in Brasilia but the life of people like Samantha Kendall.



Learning lessons at a Muslim school in Batley, Yorkshire

Photograph: Azadour Guzelian

In defence of Islamophobia



POLLY TOYNBEE
RELIGION AND
THE STATE

I am an Islamophobe. I judge Islam not by its words - the teachings of the Koran as interpreted by those Thought-for-the-Day moderate Islamic theologians. I judge Islam by the religion's deeds in the societies where it dominates. Does that make me a racist?

For I am also a Christianophobe. If Christianity were not such a spent force in this country, if it were powerful and dominant as it once was, it would still be every bit as damaging as Islam is in those theocratic states in its thrall. Christianity remains a lethal weapon in Northern Ireland. If I lived in Israel, I'd feel the same way about Judaism. Everywhere in the world where religion dominates over the state, that is a bad place to live. Religiophobia is highly rational.

The plea by the Runnymede Trust for understanding and protection for the Muslim community is understandable enough. We are still a racist society and to be a poor, black, non-English speaking Bangladeshi woman in, say, London's East End, is to be not so much a second- as a third-class citizen. No doubt some of the racism such women suffer does spring from the fact that they are Muslim. But there is no hard evidence that poor, black, non-English speakers of other faiths are treated any better than Muslims. Racism is the problem, not religion.

The Runnymede report calls for a ban on religious discrimination, pointing out that people are often attacked because of their religious dress. But discrimination on grounds of appearance is already covered by our race relations laws. If Runnymede had its way and outlawed incitement to religious hatred, I would not be allowed to write this now (which you may or may not think a good thing). Many Muslims also want our Christian blasphemy laws, mercifully almost defunct, resurrected to cover all religions. But how could any idea of free speech survive a ban on criticism or mockery of what others think and believe?

Jack Straw, who has an excellent record on race, and who also has 20,000 Muslims in his Blackburn constituency, spoke out bravely yesterday when he told the Runnymede Trust that the government would not introduce legislation to outlaw religious discrimination. The report protests that Islam is caricatured as one monolithic bloc, when of course it has its moderates and extremists with a plethora of varying interpretations in societies around the globe. The report says that Islam is seen as "barbaric, irrational, primitive and sexist" when it should be seen as "distinctly different, but not deficient and as equally worthy of respect." This is not easy with a religion that describes women as of inferior status, placing them one step behind in the divine order of things. That is not equally worthy of respect.

To be sure, it is unfair to blame some of the moderate British Muslims for the excesses of many Islamic nations. But it would be reassuring to see them out on the streets demonstrating vigorously and vociferously for the lifting of the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie, offering him their strong protection and support. The fact that he has been forced to live in solitary confinement all these years because of the threat from Islamic states is not something that can easily be soothed away by describing that religion as "equally worthy of respect". Should I, or indeed Salman Rushdie and his supporters, be branded as racists for pointing this out?

We watch the progress of justice under a shariah court in Saudi Arabia with unmitigated horror. Guilty or not, the two nurses have had no justice, however much we allow for cultural differences. No witnesses, no evidence, no cross-examination.

The defendants not allowed to know the evidence against them in order to refute it, judges sitting in secret - this isn't a cultural misunderstanding, this is injustice. Is it racist to say so? Could we still say so if there was a law protecting religions?

The report also claims the right to state support for muslim schools. Although we are the most secular and irreligious nation in Europe, one third of our state schools are run by religions - from Orthodox Jewish and Roman Catholic to Christian Brothers and bigotted nuns. The state, bizarrely, is already paying for some unpleasantly extreme religious beliefs to be taught right across the spectrum - but not yet for Muslims. That looks unjust, but only if you think we should be egalitarian about the propagation of unreason.

Ever since July 1996 the Secretary of State for Education has had the approval of the first grant maintained Muslim school sitting in the office in-tray. First Gillian Shephard, now David Blunkett, have simply left it there, pending. The proposal for a new Muslim school in Birmingham has passed all the hurdles and has received the imprimatur of the Funding Agency for Schools, as has the Islamia primary school in North London. With a waiting list of 1,000, there can hardly be said to be insufficient local "demand". What is to be done?

The Rationalist Press Association and the National Secular Society were quick

yesterday to issue a statement opposing the granting of state status and funding to any Islamic schools. They have passionately opposed all religious state education ever since the first religious school was funded in 1902. Protestants at the time protested about "Rome on the Rates".

The Rationalists have the only consistent reason for opposing Muslim schools: they are against all religion in state education. Yesterday they claimed Islamic schools "discriminate against girls, offer little artistic and physical education and serve to marginalise a community already seriously marginalised - as emphasised by the Runnymede Trust itself."

The US constitution forbids religious worship or teaching in state schools. Now is the time for us to follow suit. For once some are allowed sectarian education, there is no reason why others shouldn't be allowed theirs too - New Agers, astrologists, Moonies or any other sect or cult with a sufficient number of followers. After all, if you really believe the stars govern our everyday lives, then of course children should be taught the details of the movements and influences of the planets and the zodiac. If you think that's all nonsense but the Bible is the literal truth, be warned, for there is no satisfactory legal definition of a religion. A religion is just a cult with more followers.

Nail-biting pensées from the literary heart of Gloucestershire



JOHN WALSH

I've spent the last ten days in a state of chronic and helpless introduction. As director of the Cheltenham Festival of Literature, I've introduced at least 50 literary celebrities to cheering audiences. And I must present the 1997 Charm On A Stick Award to Alan Clark, following his performance, which dimmed; if that's the appropriate word, last weekend. He sat on a stage in front of 900 people and somehow contrived

to flirt with all of them simultaneously. There was nothing obviously seductive about it. On the contrary - Clark went out of his way to talk about serious matters, like European Monetary Union, the fall of Macmillan and the abdication of Edward VIII. He was keen to display to the world the forgotten figures of Clark the Historian and Clark the Economist, who lurk unseen within the more familiar figures of Clark the Brouder and Clark the Incurable Old Rouse. He didn't repeat his bracing prognosis that you could solve the Northern Irish problem overnight by rubbing out 600 suspected members ("I'll gladly explain what I meant by that, if you give me 10 minutes," he told Simon Hoggart. "Nah," replied Hoggart. "We prefer the original version") but he had plenty to say about the Welfare State, "which is simply the redistribution of income from the enterprising and the hard-working to the indigent". His lack of respect for the shenanigans of the Tory Party ("the combination of Redwood and Clarke at the leadership election - if I were a shockable person, I'd have been shocked by that") was balanced by a corresponding failure to feel awe before the Labour leader: "Tony Blair has transitioned, to use a management consultant's term, from being early Bill Clinton to being full-blown Margaret Thatcher to finish as up-market Billy Graham". The burghers of Cheltenham bought it wholesale. They murmured in rapture. How could

they have voted Lib Dem at the last election? Now if only the Chelsea & Kensington safe seat hadn't selected Alan C, they could surely have found a way to ...

And throughout all this stuff, you couldn't ignore an undercurrent of rampant pheromones, a sussuration of smut, that wove around the subjects of the conversation. It got everywhere, like Lida Jardine or the smell of paraffin. When Clark was asked if he used the Internet, he said, "No I find it frustrating. It takes far too long to get anything up", the audience giggled as if at a Benny Hill show. Emboldened by this response, a man in the crowd asked Clark "Has the new influx of woman MPs had a significant effect on you?", and you could hear a few score hankies being stuffed into their owners' mouths. Even Clark's unusual, rather Edwardian, pronunciation of "monetarist" as "moan-a-tryst" had a Keatsian sensuality about it, at least as far as the Gloucestershire [next 2 words itals] grande dames were concerned. Their collective desire was rewarded when Clark delivered a ringing, generalised hero-gram to the entire gender. "Anyone making remarks about the female sex is bound to sound patronising," he ventured boldly. "But I think women have superior judgement to men. On many topics, women are more humane, they're gentler. Their good instincts haven't been repressed."

Ohhhhh, shivered (or so it seemed) the entire distaff side

of Cheltenham Spa. Ohhhh, stop it you awful man ...

One intriguing presence at this year's Festival was that of a human chameleon, a man who kept turning into the people he was talking to. He came to every event which boasted a famous figure, asking questions from the floor, arguing with every author in high academic jargon, as if trying to incarnate their spirit. No subject, however recondite or unpromising, was safe from his Zelig-like interventions at question time.

Thus Nicola Horlick, in the midst of a blizzard of fluffy enquiries about her children's names and holidays and pets, found herself suddenly grilled from the floor about return-on-investment percentages, mezzanine financing, 5.7 this and 13.8 that, Rothschilds, Solomon Bros, Lazard Freres ... You'd think it was some irascible non-executive director of Ms Horlick's old employer, S G Warburg, getting his own back. But scarcely hours later, Prof Norman Davies, at the end of his lecture on European identity and its future, was abruptly counter-lectured from the carpet about the political elites and oligarchies that really run the continent. Finding no question lurking amid this I'm-a-historian-too tirade, Davies gestured wordlessly at the audience to ask him something else.

Having turned himself, briefly, into a financial wizard and a political analyst, the man (or at least his voice) surfaced again as a journalist, when Auberon Waugh and Keith Wa-

terhouse talked to Christopher Silvester about the world of newspaper columnists. The same clipped, reedy tones, oddly reminiscent of Professor Moriarty in The Moon Show, could be heard in the auditorium asking, rhetorically, Why oh why have newspaper columnists now taken over from religious leaders as the only truth-tellers that ordinary people can trust? (It could have been Paul Johnson on an off-day. It could have been AN Wilson on a good day. It was neither). The last I heard of this extraordinary person was at the end of a session in which Jeremy Lewis and David Pryce-Jones discussed Cyril Connolly,



The ohhh-so charming Alan Clark

about whom Lewis has written the official biography. After some cursory chat, Mr Zelig clasped Lewis's arm and said, "Jeremy! Don't you remember me?" He had, it appeared, turned into Connolly some time during the previous hour ...

The hot topic of the week, amazingly, is "Nail-biting and what it signifies", judging by all

those oddly forensic-looking photographs of Gordon Brown's well-chewed digits in the national papers. A professor of psychology from Manchester University, with either a severe Desmond Morris complex or a burning desire to create mischief, told the Press Association that Mr Brown's bitten nails indicate that he was feeling "out of control". The habit, he droned, is "a reflection of stress and unhappiness" and clearly signified the poor Chancellor felt "damned".

Well obviously this is good news for those of us who have spent a lifetime tearing little chunks of horn off their fingers for years and nibbling them to death. Biting one's nails may be a sign of frustration or anxiety or impatience among those who don't usually do it. But as a habit it's of no more significance than sucking your thumb. It's an accompaniment to concentration, a necessary pre-condition of reading a book, a light snack, a nicotine substitute, a spur to thought. When I look at Rodin's statue, *Le Penseur*, with the thinker's mouth reflectively brushing his folded metacarpals, I feel I know exactly what he is thinking: he is trying to decide between the tiny hangnail (middle finger, right hand) or the fat moony crescent that has just hauled itself above the horizon of the left thumb. Out of control? Stress and unhappiness? Hah! Mr Brown is in the grip of a blissful addiction, and a fruitful relationship with his physical being. It's pretentious Mancunian psychos who are out of control.

RISEING DAMP? KISS IT GOODBYE!

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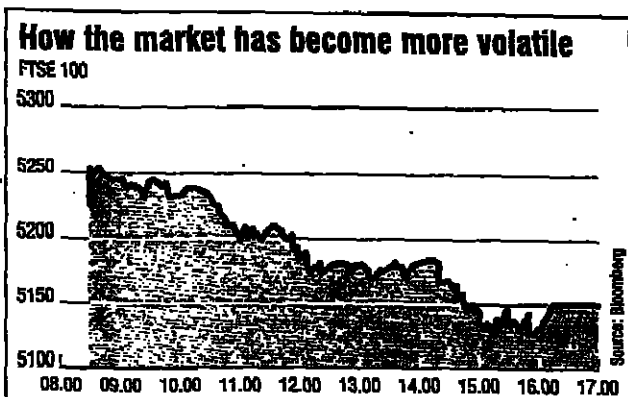
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Order-driven confusion fuelled by Asian turmoil

The Stock Exchange's new order-driven trading system had its first serious test yesterday as turmoil in Far Eastern markets spilled over into a volatile day's trading in London. Tom Stevenson and Stephen Vines report on the gyrations at home and abroad.



Shares fluctuated wildly yesterday as turmoil in Asian equity markets unsettled investors in the first serious test of the Stock Exchange's new order-driven computer which started trading on Monday. Having been 31 points higher at one stage, the FTSE 100 index of leading shares fell as much as 100 points before closing at 5148.8, down 77.1 points.

The gloomy tone was set overnight by the Hong Kong market, which tumbled 765.3 points to close at 11,637.8. The Hang Seng index has fallen by almost 15 per cent this week. Other Asian markets fell as well and in afternoon trading the bearish baton was handed on to Wall Street.

The "battle of Hong Kong", as dealers have dubbed the spreading economic crisis in the Far East, has seen the Hong Kong Monetary Authority, the former British colony's equivalent of a central bank, pitted against powerful international forces which have already forced a string of other countries in the region to devalue their currencies.

The authority's fight to maintain the local currency's peg with the US dollar, which has seen interest rates soar, has weighed heavily on a stock market whose heavy property exposure makes it vulnerable to

increases in the cost of money. In London, arbitrageurs attempting to profit from a difference between the value of FTSE futures and the index's underlying shares were blamed for some of yesterday's volatility. The index regularly jumped more than 10 points at a time as baskets of shares were bought or sold to counter derivatives trades.

The volatility of the market, which had been expected as a by-product of the introduction of automated trading, was exacerbated by continuing low volumes, although more shares were traded than at the start of the week. Dealers said the big institutional investors were still sitting on their hands until the system, which does away with the traditional quote-driven technique for dealing in the largest stocks, settled down.

Investors planning to buy or sell large amounts of stock were reported to be sticking to the telephone yesterday with too little depth in the order book to satisfy their needs. Some dealers said it was impossible to trade in some stocks, including Hays and Railtrack, at some points during the day.

The proportion of trades in FTSE 100 stocks carried out via the automated computer rather than through market-makers fell on Tuesday from 42 per cent

to 34 per cent but picked up yesterday to around 40 per cent. There appeared to be a clear divide between the US dealers, who are familiar with order-driven trading, and their British counterparts.

Another reason for the market's poor showing was a fall of 89p to 1,766p in index heavy-weight HSBC, which was hit by the overnight collapse in the Hang Seng index.

Yesterday's fall in the Hang Seng index was the biggest this year and was accompanied by even bigger falls in other indices, particularly the red-chip index, tracking China-connected companies, which suffered a one-day plunge of more than 13 per cent.

Brokers said yesterday that sell orders poured in from all directions. Some came from big players who have taken short positions in the Hang Seng index futures market. They stand to gain a great deal from falls in the physical market.

Meanwhile, interbank interest rates soared to 11 per cent yesterday, compared with 7 per cent on Friday and a prime lending rate of 8.75 per cent. These movements convinced the markets that prime rates were set to rise, a view reinforced by Tung Chee-wah, the head of the Hong Kong government, who said in London that he thought interest rates could rise in or-

der to protect the Hong Kong dollar. Hong Kong is particularly sensitive to interest rate rises as the stock market is underpinned by property counters which are highly sensitive to movements in interest rates.

Alone among its neighbours, with the exception of China, Hong Kong has been immune from the currency falls which have taken a heavy toll elsewhere. Yesterday currency turmoil in South-east Asia deepened as the Thai and Malaysian currencies fell to new lows and even the once rock-solid Singapore dollar suffered its biggest fall since 1994. A spokesman for the Hong Kong Monetary Authority yesterday described trading in the local currency as "very stable and orderly" with the Hong Kong dollar emerging on the strong side of its fixed rate of HK\$7.8 to the US dollar.

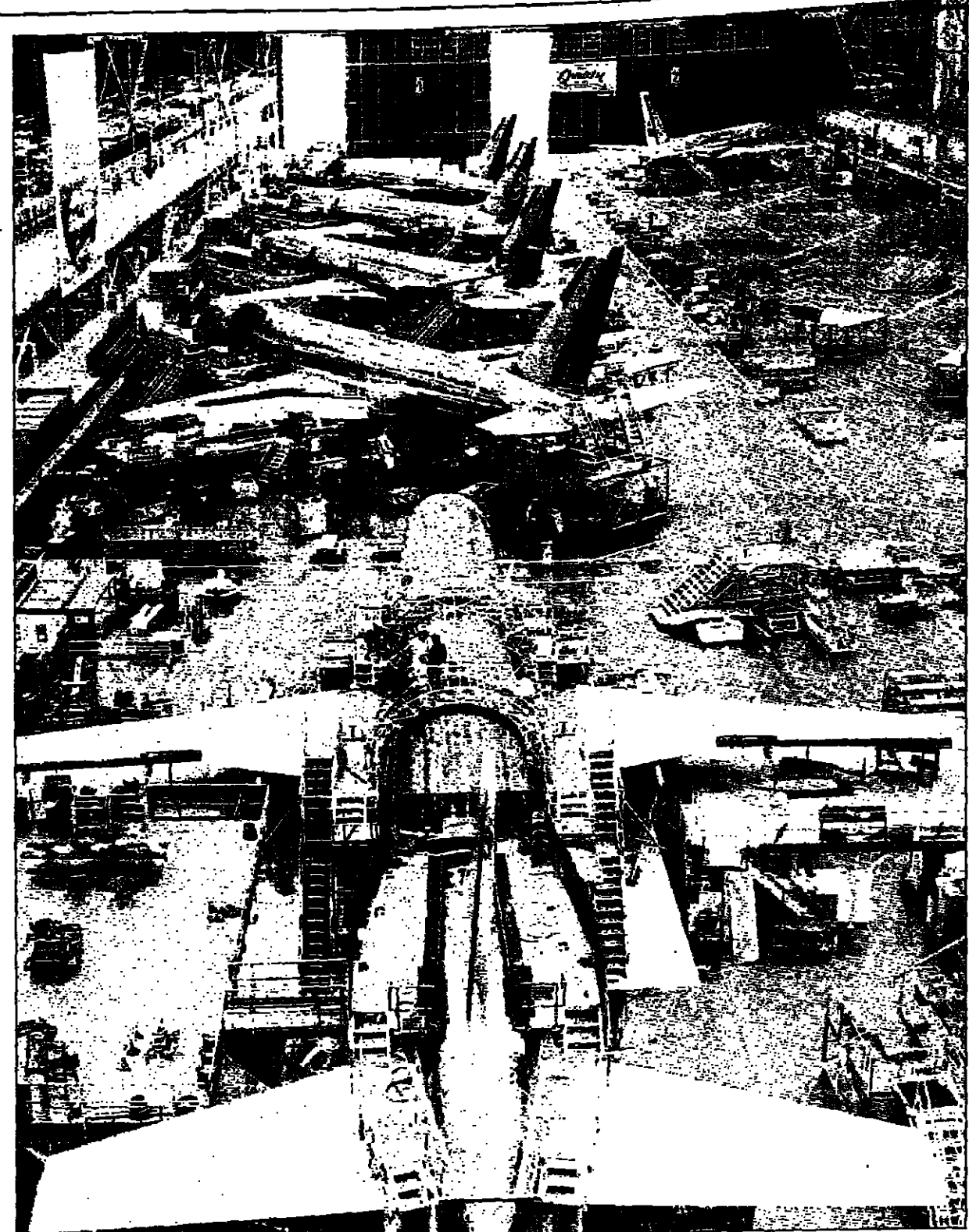
However, James Tien, the chairman of the influential Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce and a leading legislator, has broken the taboo of regarding the fixed link as sacrosanct and suggested it was time for a reassessment.

He was rebutted from all quarters, including the financial secretary, Donald Tsang, who said yesterday: "There is absolutely no pressure on me to move the link in any way."

Nevertheless, market players are haunted by the prospect of Hong Kong plunging into the mess affecting its neighbours.

Some analysts think the sell-off in Hong Kong has been overdone. "We must be getting pretty near to the point where people are going to do some bargain hunting," said Howard Georges, a director at the South China Brokerage. Ricky Tam of Delta Asia Securities said a lot of blue chips were now trading at very attractive prices.

Market report, page 27



Victim of its own success: Boeing is having difficulty adjusting to much higher production levels this year

Boeing \$2.6bn charge shocks Wall St

Boeing yesterday stunned Wall Street and the aerospace industry by warning it was taking a \$2.6bn charge to cover production problems in its commercial aircraft division. Michael Harrison explains how the US plane maker has become the victim of its own success.

The charges will plunge Boeing into a loss for the third quarter and also have an impact on its profitability throughout 1998. The announcement sent Boeing shares down by 8 per cent, making them the biggest faller in New York.

Ironically, the losses now faced by Boeing are the direct result of the boom the aircraft industry is enjoying. Production rates at its Seattle plants on the Pacific coast have doubled in the past 18 months because of unprecedented demand from the world's airlines.

Phil Condit, the Boeing chairman, said the difficulties the company was experi-

encing in adjusting to these much higher production levels this year had reached "unexpected levels". Boeing expects the production hold-ups that have resulted to knock \$1.6bn from its third-quarter earnings, due to be reported tomorrow. The group, which has just completed the \$13bn takeover of McDonnell Douglas, expects to incur further charges next year of \$1bn.

The shock news wiped \$4.25 off Boeing shares, sending them down to \$49.75 in heavy trading.

The production problems have forced Boeing to close its 747 and 737 production lines for a month while bottlenecks and supply difficulties with component manufacturers are sorted out and the thousands of extra workers Boeing has hired adjust to the increased production rates. Since spring of last year, output from Seattle has jumped from 30 aircraft to 40 aircraft a month. This year Boeing will deliver 340 aircraft compared with 220 last year and is sitting on an orders backlog of 1,629 jets.

A spokesman said: "We are suffering from a surplus of success. Airlines are or-

dering at unprecedented rates and we are struggling to ensure we can supply all the aircraft they need."

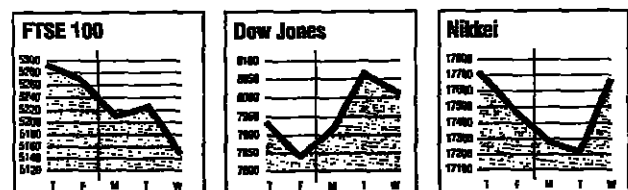
He said the problems had been incurred not so much because of the absolute levels of production, which were not at record levels by historic standards, but because of the speed of the production shift.

The worst-hit area is the production line for the new generation 737, which will account for the bulk of the \$1.6bn charge Boeing is taking in the third quarter. The company has orders for nearly 700 of the new jets but has yet to deliver a single one.

The speed with which production rates have risen has caught suppliers out and some have been unable to deliver components on time. This has resulted in severe disruption to production with large numbers of aircraft awaiting components. Boeing was also forced to make alterations to the tail section of the new 737, which delayed certification and caused the production line to back up further.

These problems have been compounded by a shift to a different production system and the strains imposed by a mass recruitment programme.

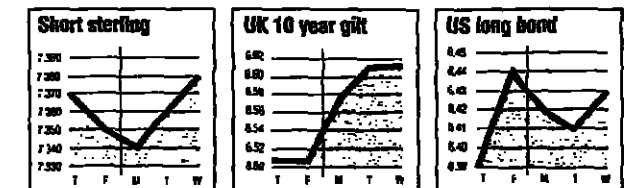
STOCK MARKETS



Indices

| Index | Close | Change | Change (%) | 52 wk high | 52 wk low | Yield (%) |
|----------------|----------|---------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| FTSE 100 | 5148.80 | -77.10 | -1.48 | 5330.80 | 3900.40 | 3.37 |
| FTSE 250 | 4916.50 | -2.00 | -0.04 | 4983.80 | 4348.10 | 3.25 |
| FTSE 350 | 2487.70 | -30.20 | -1.20 | 2555.30 | 1949.20 | 3.35 |
| FTSE All Share | 2423.62 | -27.36 | -1.11 | 2492.41 | 1925.79 | 3.33 |
| FTSE SmallCap | 2408.4 | 3.30 | 0.14 | 2406.20 | 2128.40 | 3.05 |
| FTSE Realind | 1811.8 | 0.90 | 0.07 | 1845.50 | 1198.70 | 3.18 |
| FTSE AIM | 1013.8 | 0.10 | 0.01 | 1138.00 | 1003.80 | 0.97 |
| Dow Jones | 8018.48 | -44.21 | -0.55 | 8258.31 | 5972.75 | 0.67 |
| Nikkei | 17687.77 | -765.33 | -4.17 | 18673.27 | 17204.70 | 0.81 |
| Hang Seng | 11637.77 | -765.33 | -6.57 | 12655.17 | 7500.00 | 3.57 |
| Dax | 4171.45 | 31.95 | 0.77 | 4438.93 | 2659.25 | 1.91 |

INTEREST RATES



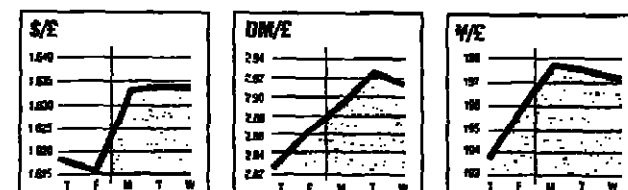
Money Market Rates

| Index | 3 month | 1 year | 1 yr chg | 10 year | 1 yr chg | Long bond | 1 yr chg |
|---------|---------|--------|----------|---------|----------|-----------|----------|
| UK | 7.36 | 1.30 | 7.56 | 1.09 | 6.61 | 0.91 | 6.55 |
| US | 5.81 | 0.28 | 6.09 | 0.28 | 6.14 | -0.43 | 6.43 |
| Japan | 0.53 | 0.03 | 0.59 | -0.04 | 1.93 | -0.83 | 2.56 |
| Germany | 3.67 | 0.56 | 4.21 | 0.97 | 5.76 | -0.24 | 6.29 |

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

| Rises | Price (p) | Chg (p) | % Chg | Falls | Price (p) | Chg (p) | % Chg |
|----------------|-----------|---------|-------|----------------|-----------|---------|-------|
| Biochemicals | 665.00 | 80.00 | 13.68 | HSBC Hedges | 1890.00 | -98.00 | -5.51 |
| B&B Mining | 195.00 | 11.50 | 6.27 | Biffen | 205.50 | -11.50 | -5.30 |
| Brit Biotech | 121.50 | 5.50 | 4.74 | Cable and Wire | 490.00 | -27.00 | -5.22 |
| Coatlink Group | 261.00 | 11.00 | 4.40 | RMC Group | 807 | -43 | -4.53 |

CURRENCIES



Exchange Rates

| Unit | at Sep | Change | 1 yr Ago | Unit | at Sep | Change | 1 yr Ago |
|---------|--------|--------|----------|----------|--------|--------|----------|
| Dollar | 1.6335 | -0.07c | 1.5995 | Sterling | 0.6122 | +0.02c | 0.6282 |
| D-Mark | 2.9135 | -0.02p | 2.4409 | D-Mark | 1.7834 | -0.47p | 1.5260 |
| Yen | 197.25 | +0.22 | 179.73 | Yen | 120.73 | +0.16 | 112.36 |
| £ Index | 102.20 | -0.10 | 89.30 | \$ Index | 105.50 | +0.10 | 97.80 |

OTHER INDICATORS

Key Indicators

| at Sep | at Sep | Chg | 1 yr Ago | at Sep | at Sep | Chg | 1 yr Ago |
|-----------------|--------|------|----------|------------|--------|------|----------|
| Brutal Oil (\$) | 19.68 | 0.40 | 24.66 | GDP | 112.80 | 3.50 | 109.0 |
| Gold (\$) | 329.25 | 0.35 | 384.00 | RPI | 159.39 | 3.8 | 153.76 |
| Silver (\$) | 4.97 | 0.02 | 4.96 | Base Rates | 7.00 | 5.75 | |

Source: Bloomberg

Drop in sales blamed on one-off factors

High-street sales volumes fell sharply last month, but the drop was explained by special factors such as the Royal funeral. Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, reports on the debate about whether or not the Bank of England will decide to raise interest rates next month.

Yesterday's official retail sales figures kept City economists busy trying to figure out how much of the 1.9 per cent drop in volumes last month was explained by one-off factors. While there was no doubt that the funeral, the unseasonably warm weather and the tailing-off of building society windfalls dented sales, the experts could not agree what this said about the underlying pace of growth in the economy.

The Office for National Statistics said the special factors probably knocked 2 per cent off sales, implying that underlying volumes were roughly flat. This would have left the annual growth rate unchanged at more than 5 per cent, whereas the published figure showed it slowing to 3.7 per cent.

Mark Wall, an economist at

Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said yesterday's figures were a special case. "There is no firm evidence that the economy is slowing, while inflation pressures, particularly from the labour market, are rising," he said.

On the other side of the argument, John O'Sullivan at NatWest Markets said the drop in sales could not be shrugged off as a special case. "It is difficult to see the Monetary Policy Committee deciding that we need an immediate rate rise," he concluded. The pound weakened a shade to DM91 yesterday.

The difficulty in interpreting yesterday's figures means figures for third-quarter GDP, the broadest measure of economic activity, will be more than usually important. Most analysts expect the figures, due tomorrow, to show an increase in national output of around 1 per cent.

More than that would tip the balance in favour of a quarter-point rise in interest rates to 7.25 per cent in November. Even 1 per cent growth during the quarter would be well above the economy's sustainable trend.

Retail sales account for two-fifths of consumer spending and exclude items such as new cars. The Bank of England's decision might hinge on the pace of growth in services, where skill shortages and pay pressures appear most intense.

Investors to be offered shares in Third World ventures

The public is to be invited to buy shares in Third World investment projects following yesterday's announcement that the Government intends to privatise the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC), which channels funds to ventures in some of the world's poorest countries.

Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development, who has championed the partial sale of CDC, is keen that private investors are en-

couraged to take stakes when the business is floated on the stock market, probably in 1999.

The Government plans to float a majority stake, probably 60 per cent, with the aim of ploughing the proceeds back into the development programme at the same time as freeing CDC to tap private sources of capital.

Lord Cairns, CDC's chairman, said that with a new financial structure and access to capital markets, it could double

its growth rate and gear up the balance sheet to invest an additional £100m a year.

The privatisation of CDC will be the first since Labour came into power. The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, said the CDC could be improved by becoming a public-private partnership. The Government will retain a substantial majority holding and will also retain a golden share, allowing it to determine investment policy.

There were suggestions yes-

terday that the privatisation could value CDC at £500m but officials stressed that no decisions had been made on how to structure its balance sheet or the mix of debt and equity.

The CDC has invested £1.6bn since it began life 50 years ago, pioneering the development of palm oil plantations in Sabah and Sarawak. It now leads only to private-sector businesses.

— Michael Harrison
Outlook, page 25

Train operators face fresh fines for call answering failures

More than 10 per cent of rail passengers using the national telephone inquiry service are still failing to get through. Randeep Ramesh explains why, despite protestations from train companies, the regulator will fine them for not meeting his performance targets.

per cent of calls from passengers in four weeks. John Swift QC, the rail regulator, instigated the investigation into the service after months of "awful" service. In the four-week period under scrutiny, nearly 13 calls in every 100 went unanswered.

This is the second time the regulator has acted. In September, Mr Swift fined the 25 passenger train operators £250,000 after they failed to answer nearly 750,000 calls in a month.

Although the system produced a considerably better performance than the previous month it was not good enough. In the week ending 27 Sep-

tember, nearly 20 per cent of all inquiries – more than 340,000 calls – were not answered.

The system has been handling more than 1 million calls a week – up by more than 200,000 on last year's figures – but has seemed incapable of taking many more enquiries.

The open-ended "enforcement order" means the regulator's office can keep penalising the privatised industry if it continually misses Mr Swift's target of 90 per cent.

The train companies argued that the Southall train crash on 19 September had put such a severe strain on the sys-

tem that a week of particularly poor performance should be excluded from the statistics. Mr Swift did not agree. His officials pointed out that for the week ending 20 September the operators answered 90.2 per cent of calls.

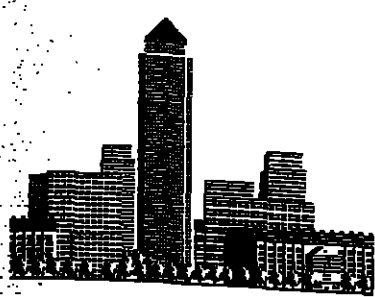
On the day of the incident, when a passenger train ploughed into a freight wagon, more than 80,000 calls were received in one three-hour period. This is double the capacity of the telephone system for the period. Mr Swift did allow the large numbers of missed calls on the day of the crash to be stripped from his calculations.

However, his officials have taken a

hard line and insisted that the extra calls made by concerned passengers during the following week have to be included.

The Association of Train Companies (Atoc), which represents the 25 passenger operators and runs the telephone system, claimed that, without the Southall disaster, it would have easily met the 90 per cent target.

Atoc executives have also commissioned a firm of telecommunications consultants to investigate how emergency services and airlines deal with sudden, large numbers of calls.



OUTLOOK ON TURMOIL IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA. REDEFINING THE CHANCELLOR'S ROLE. AND NEW LABOUR'S FIRST EXPERIMENT IN PRIVATISATION

Hong Kong crash gives London the jitters

Forget fears of a crash on Wall Street: we've already had one in Hong Kong. Yesterday's 6 per cent fall in the Hang Seng index means the Hong Kong market has now fallen 30 per cent in only two months, with half of that collapse occurring since the weekend. Having taken the weaker economies to the cleaners during the summer, the international speculators are showing a worrying interest in destabilising the region's only relatively safe haven.

How much the deepening crisis in South-east Asia matters was underscored by yesterday's tumble in the London stock market, its worst in almost two months. With ABB announcing job cuts as a consequence of the Malaysian government's postponement of its giant Bakun dam project, the financial meltdown is showing unerring evidence of moving out into the real world economy.

There are good reasons why Hong Kong, which has held up so well in the face of the region's woes, should have started to suffer as well. As the most liquid market in the area, it was always likely to be the conduit through which pressures on South-east Asian markets would flow. Investors looking for sizeable redemptions have little choice but to sell shares in Hong Kong.

The falls have been exacerbated by the pressure on the peg between the Hong Kong dollar and its US counterpart, which is looking increasingly shaky. Since the Peking authorities seem to harbour the objective of devaluing against the US currency, there must be a question mark over the former colony's stomach for main-

taining the present parity. The instability is worsened by the high level of margin trading in Hong Kong and the Hang Seng's heavy exposure to the property market. It is not hard to see why confidence has evaporated so quickly.

With blue-chip shares trading on ridiculously low ratings, there is probably still plenty of value in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, valuation criteria do not seem to be the most important driver of markets these days and until the currency situation is clarified one way or the other, it is hard to see a meaningful recovery. Even then, investors' appetite for the region is likely to remain low for years to come.

Downsizing the Chancellor's job?

What is left there for a Chancellor of the Exchequer to do if macroeconomic policy is running on rails and there's no need or desire for him to fine tune the economy any longer? Gordon Brown has often stated this is what he is aiming for even if he's a way to go before he achieves it. To this end control of monetary policy has already been put in the hands of the newly independent Bank of England and the Chancellor has set clear targets and parameters for fiscal policy and the public finances.

Few even in opposition disagree much with the basics of this approach. If he succeeds in the goal of sustained low inflation growth, there is a sense in which it can be

said that he has done himself out of a job. Politicians traditionally aspire to be chancellor so that they can control the economy. What Gordon Brown has been saying is that it is wrong to want to do that. So other than act as ultimate decision maker in the annual spending round and generally get his knickers in a twist over the single currency, what should he be doing?

A benign macroeconomic policy isn't the only thing that makes for a successful economy and it may be that future chancellors, now that the broad outline of economic policy is so widely accepted, nationally and internationally, will need to interest and involve themselves much more in microeconomic matters - what have traditionally been regarded as the dull and boring areas of training, regulation, welfare, corporate taxation and competition policy. This may sound suspiciously like a formula for meddling even more than the Treasury already does in the affairs of other departments, but Mr Brown does have a point.

The deregulatory reforms of the 1980s, bold and adventurous though they were at the time, left the task of putting in place a modern economy only half complete. In competition policy and law, Britain is still streets behind the US, and although the new Competition Bill aims to correct this, there is still a big gap between the aim of a vibrant, competitive business environment and the reality. The Government's key role in training and education goes without saying. Mundane, unexciting and time consuming these matters might

seem, but once macro economic policy is on the right track, these are the things that future chancellors will increasingly have to concern themselves with.

A privatisation with a conscience

Fresh from sending BAT Industries off down tobacco road, its chairman Lord Cairns has been busy on another little spot of corporate restructuring. Yesterday he struck gold when Tony Blair announced that Labour's first experiment in privatisation will be to sell off a majority stake in the Commonwealth Development Corporation, which the chain-smoking lord also happens to chair.

CDC, a vehicle for channelling public funds into third world projects, has been plugging away at getting itself privatised for 18 months. The election result undid all the effort it had put into persuading Linda Chalker what a good idea it all was. But, by luck, Clare Short, her successor at what is now called the Department for International Development, took up the mantle with gusto. Provided time can be found this parliamentary session, then investors will be able to buy shares in a publicly quoted CDC some time in 1999.

This will be quite unlike any self-off seen before. The early privatisations of gas, telecoms, water and electricity at knock down prices were no brainers that guaranteed small fortunes for shareholders and man-

agements alike. Had Labour wanted to ape the process there are still a few tasty morsels left in the locker like the Post Office, air traffic control and maybe even the Tube.

CDC promises to be quite a different animal - a sort of ethical investment trust bearing the personal imprimatur of the Hon Member for Birmingham Ladywood. No disrespect meant to Ms Short, but this is not going to be regarded in the City as an instantly attractive investment proposition. The very thought of palm oil plantations in Sarawak and sugar beet in Swaziland will be sufficient deterrent for many.

Under its present structure, the CDC is required to earn an 8 per cent return on capital employed. Although the balance sheet will be dressed up to give CDC the scope to gear up and investors the incentive to provide equity and loan capital, there will always be better investment opportunities around.

This is not about maximising returns, however. The idea is to provide a vehicle for investors with a conscience who share Ms Short's vision of how best to help the poorest countries in the world. Just in case the privately owned CDC is inclined to forget its heritage, the Government intends to hang on to a golden share allowing it to set the company's parameters. The kick back for Ms Short is that whatever proceeds the flotation raises will be ploughed into her development budget rather than the general government pot. Given the nature of the beast, she may have to settle for somewhat less than the £500m being touted yesterday.

Government set to consult on lifting of broadcasting ban on BT

British Telecom could gain the freedom to offer television down its phone wires next year, under proposals to be announced soon by the Department of Trade and Industry. But as Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent, explains, another proposal being canvassed would delay the ending of the so-called broadcasting ban until 2000.



Wired in: A trial in west London will only offer customers Internet services

A team of Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) officials has been investigating the broadcasting ban since shortly after the general election and is expected to publish a consultation document on the issue in the next few weeks. The current policy, formulated by the Conservatives, prevents BT from sending live television channels down its telephone network until 2001, which is 10 years after the start of the first cable television and telephone franchises.

The DTI is understood to have produced at least three options for the consultation paper, the first of which mirrors Labour's pre-election policy to end the ban in 1998. The policy emerged with the controversial "deal" between BT and Labour, where the company would offer free connections for schools to the information superhighway.

The second proposal would restrict the liberalisation to parts of the UK not covered by cable companies' franchises. This would exclude BT from many urban areas, which have

the highest concentration of consumer buying power, though BT would be able to launch the service without a licence from Ofcom, the industry watchdog.

The third proposal is likely to prove the most controversial, delaying the end of the ban until 2000. It would represent a two-year delay on Labour's pre-election policy and on the recommendations of a 1995 Commons Select Committee report, which also said the ban should end on a rolling basis starting next year.

The DTI is thought to have offered some concessions to the cable industry, after concerns raised by Don Cruickshank, the industry regulator. Cable companies said the 10-year ban was

essential to justify their investment programmes. Mr Cruickshank told the DTI the ban, which applies to all telephone companies, could not be removed without a much broader review of broadcasting policy, a principle apparently partly accepted by ministers.

The DTI had been expected to release its proposals within days, but there was speculation last night that the Prime Minister's office had delayed giving its approval. Barbara Roche, the telecommunications minister, was thought likely to mention the review at a cable industry conference earlier this week, but gave no hint about the consultation paper. A DTI spokesman said ministers were

still formulating the proposals.

However, industry experts have doubted BT's commitment to a full-scale move into the entertainment market, following trials of the digital technology last year using its local copper network. Some 2,500 homes in Essex took part in the experiment, which included video-on-demand film channels and home shopping.

Another trial will start in west London next spring, but will only offer Internet services. Since last year's trials, BT's sights have shifted to a collaboration with British Sky Broadcasting, taking a 32.5 per cent stake in British Interactive Broadcasting, the digital satellite venture.

Further blow to RJB as gas-fired power plants are approved

The Government yesterday delivered its second blow to the coal industry in the space of two days when it approved another two gas-fired power projects and relaxed the rules on energy-efficient generating schemes. Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent, examines the latest setback for RJB Mining.

John Battle, the industry minister, gave the go-ahead to two gas-fired combined heat and power (CHP) plants, one by PowerGen proposed for British Steel's Port Talbot complex and another by National Power for Esso's oil refinery at Fawley in Hampshire. It brings to five the number of gas-fired power stations approved by Labour since the election.

The Esso plant, costing £60m, would generate 132 megawatts of electricity capacity, of which about 100 megawatts would be sold back to the National Grid. RJB

Mining said this would inevitably displace coal-fired generating capacity.

The announcement of the projects came the day after Mr Battle ruled out any direct state help for RJB, owner of most of the former British Coal pits, which has yet to renegotiate most of its long term-coal contracts with the big generators for next year.

RJB shares recovered 11.5p to 195p after a 24 per cent plunge on Tuesday following a sell recommendation by a City analyst.

Mr Battle yesterday said

the Department of Trade and Industry would encourage more energy-saving CHP plants, which utilise the surplus heat produced during the generation process, by relaxing the licensing regime. The measure was planned by the previous government but was yesterday reaffirmed by Mr Battle.

The DTI also disclosed that a further eight applications to build CHP stations had been submitted since April, with enough generating capacity to displace two million tonnes of coal.

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Bupa to bid £240m for Care First

Bupa, the private health insurer, is in early-stage talks to buy Care First, the UK's largest quoted nursing home company. Bupa is understood to have offered 150p a share in cash, valuing Care First at £240m. A deal is understood to be about a month away from conclusion, writes Sameena Ahmad.

Buying Care First would add 135 nursing homes to Bupa's existing 76 homes, making it one of the UK's leading providers of integrated healthcare. Given controversy over Care First's management, which was criticised by institutions for driving out Chai Patel, the group's former chief executive, it is unlikely that Keith Bradshaw will stay on to manage the integrated company.

Bupa has already appointed Graham Smith as managing director of its nursing homes business. Mr Smith was formerly chief executive of Goldsbrough Healthcare, which Bupa bought for £76m two months ago.

Bupa has been actively and rapidly expanding its healthcare business over the last two years. Buying Goldsbrough in August added 32 nursing homes and six hospitals to Bupa's portfolio.

That deal has just been given clearance by Nigel Griffiths, Labour's competition minister. Mr Griffiths has accepted Bupa's undertakings to dispose of Goldsbrough's 21 per cent stake in Independent British Healthcare, a hospitals group, by 31 March 1998 and so will not refer the acquisition to the monopolies commission.

Bupa spent another £68m in 1996 buying Greenall's 30 Countryhouse nursing homes chain and bought another 12 homes from Community Hospitals earlier this year.

Keith Bradshaw, the chairman of Care First, would not comment on the group's statement. Several other companies that have been linked to a possible bid for Care First denied yesterday they were interested or even talking to Care First. Pat Carter, chief executive of Westminster Healthcare said he was not interested in bid-

ding. Neither is Mr Patel. A source at Norwich Union, the insurance group, yesterday, said the company had not been approached and that its focus was on products not running nursing homes.

Nursing Home Properties, which sells and leases back nursing homes, said that buying Care First would make leave too big a proportion of their assets with one tenant. A source close to the company said: "We are always looking for assets, but given the alleged management problems, I would think it would be very unlikely we would buy them."

However, an insider at Speciality Care, owned by the aggressive US healthcare group Integrated Healthcare said that they would be keeping an eye on developments. Northern Rock, which owns the Regency chain of care homes said they would not be interested in a bid.

Mr Mulligan resumes quest to join the legends

Wincanton plays host to two of racing's most famous names today in Lester Piggott and Richard Edmondson reports the real star of the show could turn out to be the Gold Cup winner, Mr Mulligan.

The jumps season starts in effect today when the entertainment on offer just off the B3081 in Somerset supersedes anything the Flat can throw at us. Chariy race day at Wincanton, in aid of the Injured Jockeys' Fund and the Mark Davies Injured Riders' Fund, has so many attractions that the prospect of putting rubble under your rear wheels at the pitch-black close of play in order to escape the course is less dispiriting than normal.

The youngest luminaries on the programme are Lester Pig-

gott's son, Jamie, and Lord Oaksey's grandson, Alfie Bradstock, who will ride ponies to general ambivalence in an exercise which will at least keep two old men happy. Lester has got a recurrence of a hand injury, probably the one won't get by accepting presents, and does not ride in the celebrity race. However, bottom and back of legends will be in close proximity when the Long Fellow partners the grey horse in a parade. (If you cannot decipher either of these *nomes de plume* you're on the wrong page).

The exhausted grey athlete is well into the veteran phase of life now and limits his public appearances to all-expenses-paid flypasts around the country's racecourses. It's the same sort of life for Desert Orchid. Piggott and Dessie will prance around before the Desert Orchid South Western Pattern Chase, which will be illuminated by another Gold Cup winner, the incumbent Mr Mulligan.

This is the orange horse's

first outing since the big day and he faces just four rivals including Gabish, who is 75lb out of the handicap. In theory Mr Mulligan should be able to give him a race if a flat apprentice joins Tommy McCoy on his back for the 2m5f journey.

Mr Mulligan greeted us with a shocker on his seasonal debut last year, when a poisoned foot was cured only late on in his preparation for Chetworth's Rehearsal Chase. The nine-year-old is showing little of the

lethargy of 12 months ago following a summer at the Bristol farm of his owner, Michael Worcester. The swollen joints he incurred on Chetworth's unusually bony ground in March have repaired themselves.

Mr Mulligan returned to the Folly House yard of his trainer, Noel Chance, in early August and has not missed a day of exercise, entirely thanks to the new all-weather gallop at Lambourn. Noel says his charge is in spitting form, but then he

has been known to be economical or dissemble whatever it is they do in Parliament.

In the build-up to Chetworth last season Mr Mulligan was transported to Newbury as part of his preparation. During a routine canter McCoy may have wondered if someone had substituted his mount with something pink and squealing. "He worked terribly and the lead horse would have beaten him half the track if we'd let him," Chance said. "I was seri-

ously disappointed but I couldn't let the horse down. I told McCoy not to worry about it and that he wasn't always that bad. I would sort the press."

"McCoy told me: 'I'm going to have to tell them that I'm happy. But I'm [adjective deleted] not.'"

The chestnut himself usually gives punters a clue about the state of his well being. If he shakes his head violently when he goes out on to the course he's going to run well.

Chance is just happy to get the caravan back on the road. He hopes Mr Mulligan has retained the ability to sweep round a race track deceptively quickly. "He's the sort of horse that when he's fit I like to run him because so much can go wrong with horses," the trainer said. "You never think he's doing much on the gallops and even in his races he doesn't appear to be going too quickly. He just grinds on and on and on with relentless galloping."

This is a debut and final prep

Derby-winner Benny retired to stud

This year's Derby winner, Benny The Dip, has run his last race, the colt's trainer, John Gosden, announced yesterday. The son of Silver Hawk gave Gosden and his jockey, Willie Ryan, their first victory in the Classic when he beat Silver Patriarch and Pat Eddery by a short head.

After placed efforts behind Pilsudski and Singpiel in the Coral-Eclipse Stakes at

Sandown in July and York's Judmonte International the following month, he was prepared for the Dubai Champion Stakes at Newmarket last Saturday.

Before a possible tilt at the Breeders' Cup Turf at Hollywood Park on 8 November.

But after running a disappointing sixth of seven to Pilsudski at Newmarket, Benny The Dip has been retired to stud

at Claiborne Farm, Kentucky following consultation between Gosden and the colt's American owner, Landon Knight.

Ryan paid the colt a rich tribute. "As a small child you grow up wanting to win the Derby and he provided me with that, the Derby win that every jockey would love. When I needed him he dug deep," he said.

CRICKET

Australian players may go on strike

Talks between the Australian Cricket Board and the Australian players' association over rights and salaries broke down yesterday and a players' strike is now possible.

The ACB chief executive, Mal Speed, believed that the board was totally justified in rejecting a proposal on wages and conditions from the Australian Cricketers' Association.

The Association president, Tim May, a former Test player, said his group had been seeking a meeting with the board for several weeks and requested the ACB to reveal its financial position.

The association says cricketers are not receiving a big enough percentage of profits made from domestic Sheffield Shield and other matches. It wants higher payments for Shield players in particular, many of whom earn only around £10,000 per season.

The two parties met for about two hours on Tuesday night and May said the association presented its proposal over terms and conditions to the board at the end of that meeting. He said a further meeting yesterday afternoon between the parties lasted only 30 seconds, enough time for the board to read a statement to the association officials.

"They entered the room and read from a statement, basically saying the negotiations were concluded," May said. "We're extremely disappointed."

May would not rule out strike action. "It's an option," he said. "It's something no one particularly wants to think about prior to this meeting."

Speed said the board feels that the association demands could put the "future of Sheffield Shield cricket at risk and affect club cricket throughout the country."

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WINCANTON

2.05 Lonicera 4.00 GALES CAVALIER (nap)
2.30 Royal Action 4.30 Mutual Agreement
3.00 Galatari Jane 5.00 Mrs Eam

3.30 Royal Barge

GOING: Good (Good to Firm in places).

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Piggott) 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Liverpool fans unite in disillusionment

Liverpool's abject performance in Strasbourg fuelled growing concerns that something is seriously wrong with the red machine.

Guy Hodgson spent yesterday on Merseyside talking to fans losing patience with the club's manager, Roy Evans.

The face was florid and the eyes had the dewy look of a man holding back the tears of disappointment. "I'm disillusioned," he said unnecessarily because his body language spoke of graver emotions.

This was not Roy Evans, although this description was appropriate for the tortured features that had addressed the BBC's cameras at the end of Liverpool's Uefa Cup tie in Strasbourg. This was a supporter, who was numbing his sorrows in a pub 100 yards from Anfield.

"Just like that," he had said, as he entered. "Strasbourg went through our defence like a gate," and he opened and shut the door twice to illustrate the point. "Roy Evans says he's driven round the bend by the players. He should try wasting his wages on them."

At the memorial to the victims of Hillsborough, the sentiments were similar. "The defence was crap," a middle-aged man said, "and so much for Paul Ince. He was supposed to bring steel to the team, but he's gone missing in Europe against Celtic and now Strasbourg. The Guv'nor? Don't make me laugh."

If there was any consolation

for Evans as he contemplated an unhappy 3-0 defeat in France, it was that the anger of his supporters appeared to be heading in the direction of the players. At least for the moment, his managerial aptitude was not being questioned.

Which makes a change, but, almost certainly, a temporary one. It has become a cliché on Liverpool's local radio stations to hear someone say: "Evans has lost the players' respect," while his tactics and spending are frequent objects of scorn. The consensus on Merseyside is Evans will either step down or be sacked unless the team win something (and they do not

and Danny Murphy was expected to transform a nearly team into the real thing.

In theory, a side that had lacked resolution should have bought a backbone with those purchases, but so far the limpness that marked the performances of the previous two seasons has lived on.

Even Evans seems to have reached a limit. In the past he has protected his charges, pleading for patience, but on Wednesday his frustration boiled over. "It's the same old story," he groaned, "and it's driving me round the bend. I'm the man in charge, I make the decisions, but I can't go out there to kick the ball for them."

"You can't defend like that in Europe - or in any competition. I know they're better than that, and they do, too. The heart is there but we have got to look at ourselves and try to find out where we have gone wrong as a team. We have to decide what is our best side."

Ah, the best side. Supporters deride the players for their attitude but despair at the lack of tactical direction. Evans has oscillated between four and five in the defence so far this season and neither has looked that convincing.

Against Everton he tried a flat back four and lost 2-0 while the attempt to plug the gaps with an extra man in Strasbourg looked shambolic. The space behind the wing-backs, Jason McAteer and Stig Inge Bjornebye, was probed persistently by the French side who were aided by a lack of width among Liverpool's central three.

Tommy Smith, who won the European and two Uefa Cups with Liverpool in the Seventies and is now a commentator for local radio, despaired at the lack

Roy Evans' record as Liverpool manager

Appointed: January 1994

1994-95 League: 4th
League Cup: Winners (beat Bolton 2-1);
FA Cup: 6th round (lost 2-1 to Tottenham)
1995-96 League: 3rd
League Cup: 4th round (lost 1-0 to Newcastle);
FA Cup: Final (lost 1-0 to Manchester United)
1996-97 League: 4th
League Cup: 5th Round (lost 2-1 to Middlesbrough);
FA Cup: 4th Round (lost 4-2 to Chelsea)
European Cup-Winners' Cup: Semi-final (lost 3-2 on aggregate to Paris St-Germain)

mean the Coca-Cola Cup) this season. As they had said in the pub, almost as a one: "Shergar's got more chance in the Derby."

Ninth in the Premiership and, barring a near miracle at Anfield in a fortnight, out of the Uefa Cup, the sense of disillusionment swirling round the city is profound. The more so because the £11m Evans spent in the summer on Ince, Oyvind Leonhardsen, Karlheinz Riedle



A pensive Roy Evans, driven to distraction by Liverpool's failings, suffers in Strasbourg

Photograph: Mike Egerton/Empics

of learning. "Look at Manchester United," he said. "They got used to playing in Europe and are getting better each year, but not Liverpool. They're not good enough. You don't have so many bad results if you are a good side."

"They don't look too bad up

front or in midfield, but in defence they are absolutely awful. 4-4-2 is a better formation than this back five. The wing-backs get caught out of position, while the three centre-halves hold hands in the middle instead of going out to cover."

Chris Lawler, part of Liv-

erpool's 1973 Uefa Cup winning team, echoed Smith's sentiments. "Liverpool's defence did not look right and they were under pressure from the first whistle," he said. "It seems to be a combination of things from a lack of confidence to a lack of consistency."

Evans has harked on about his side's inconsistency for two years and, to an extent, has conquered the problem. No longer sampling highs and lows, at present Liverpool are just average. And at a club which was once a byword for success, there is no greater condemnation.

Little 'close' to a signing

Paul Gascoigne's long-term future at Rangers was still unclear last night as Aston Villa pondered over whether to step up their bid to prise the England midfielder away from Ibrox.

Gascoigne's agent, Mel Stein, confirmed that he has had further talks with the Villa chairman, Doug Ellis, on Ellis's return from the goalless draw with Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday.

Brian Little, the Villa manager, had previously indicated that any deal to bring players to the club would have to wait until the Uefa Cup date was out the way. However, he indicated yesterday that there could be a signing very shortly. "I said before the weekend that there

might be a signing this week and that statement still stands. There might be something. The chairman and I will sit down and talk about things over the next 24 hours."

But any move to bring Gascoigne back to the Premiership and give an added spur to Villa's European campaign appears to be on hold until Gascoigne's intentions are known.

Stein said: "I have spoken to Doug Ellis today and he has asked the same questions as everybody else. Everyone wants to know whether Paul wants to leave Rangers and there is no point in anybody doing anything about it until we do. I know Rangers want him to stay. Walter Smith spoke to me this week

confirming he wants him to stay."

After Gascoigne's virtuoso display in last Saturday's 7-0 defeat of Dunfermline, Smith said then that only when his chairman, David Murray, had received a bid of £4.5m would a possible transfer be discussed.

Ellis and other Premiership chairmen must now decide whether to follow up their interest with an offer that could tempt Gascoigne to quit the Scottish champions. One of the clubs linked with the player, Crystal Palace, look to have ruled themselves out. Steve Coppell, the manager, confirmed that he made an enquiry four or five weeks ago, but feels that money would be a stumbling block.

Banks backing all-seat stadiums

Tony Banks, the Minister for Sport, has confirmed that the Government has no plans to bring back terracing to football grounds. He said there would be no review of the Taylor Report recommendation of all-seaters stadiums in the top two divisions.

Speaking at a conference on the financing of clubs, he said: "The quality of facilities throughout these divisions rank with the best in the world and give us a head start in our bid for the 2006 World Cup."

He added: "The Government has no plans to review the Taylor Report's recommendations which identified all-seating as the factor which contributed most to spectator safety."

Chelsea tie under threat

Rudul Gullit fears that he and his Chelsea players could be forced to spend an extra day in Tromsø if today's Cup-Winners' Cup tie is postponed until tomorrow because of a saturated pitch at the Alffheim Stadium.

The Chelsea squad had to train indoors following their arrival last night in the Norwegian town 200 miles north of the Arctic Circle. And at the airport the party had to pick their way through more than a foot of snow in order to move the 150 yards from the runway to the airport terminal.

The covers and undersoil heating have done their job in keeping the snow off the surface, but the price has been that the top of the pitch is ab-

solutely saturated and, in Gullit's view, seemingly unplayable. "They have covered it but it doesn't look like a pitch to me," he said.

"Perhaps tomorrow it will be different, and of course we want to play - there has to be a game and I know Tromsø have put in a lot of hard work. But if the referee tries to bounce the ball and it just sits there and doesn't bounce, because it's so wet, then you simply can't play."

The Uefa observer, Jürgen Werner of Germany, was due to fly in late this evening and an inspection is planned for this morning. If he rules that the pitch is unplayable then Chelsea could be forced to stay until Fri-

day to get the game played, although the decision might be taken to start again - perhaps in Oslo - in two weeks' time, putting the second leg back until the next round of European matches in late November.

Tromsø officials remain confident that the match would go ahead, with around 100 volunteers drafted in to clear the stands and terraces to allow the capacity 6,438 crowd to get in.

Johnny Ingebrigtsen, the club spokesman, said: "We had crossed our fingers that winter might not come until next week, but it arrived on Sunday. We're quite sure, though, there will be a game."

Martin Lipton - Tromsø

New batch of French players fail drug tests

The French football federation indicated yesterday that more players had recently failed dope tests, but declined to reveal the names of the players or the substances involved.

The FFF were not expected to elaborate until testing of B samples had been completed. "Following multiple tests recently ordered by the FFF, it seems that the results of some tests have revealed banned substances in the urine of some players," the FFF said in a statement.

The French sports daily L'Equipe said yesterday that the

new tests involved three players, who allegedly took steroids. L'Equipe added that a judge fighter was also involved.

The French First Division team Le Havre announced earlier this month that their striker Cyrille Pouget had failed a test for the banned steroid nandrolone.

Last season, the Lille midfielder David Garcion was suspended for nine months for taking the same drug.

The FFF said they would "launch an emergency plan to fight doping" if the tests were confirmed.

Coca-Cola has refused to confirm whether they are about to end their sponsorship of the Scottish League Cup. The company has invested over £3m in the competition over the past four years, but their present deal expires after the 30 November final between Celtic and Dundee United.

Bell's has already withdrawn their £10m backing of the League programme following uncertainty over the proposed breakaway by the top 10 clubs.

The loss of another major sponsor would be a further blow to the Scottish game, with the smaller clubs looking for assurances over their share of future sponsorship deals.

A Coca-Cola spokesman would only say: "Discussions about a new contract are on-going."

The former Sweden coach, Tommy Svensson, was due to meet Benfica officials in Paris yesterday to discuss becoming the Portuguese club's next manager.

Svensson told Swedish paper, daily Expressen, he would meet João Vale e Azevedo, a candidate for the next presidency of Benfica. A vote is due

to take place on 31 October for the position.

All the candidates have set out their plans for the future, one of them favouring the former England manager Bobby Robson as coach, who is still employed by Barcelona, another putting Coventry's Gordon Strachan at the top of his list to fill that job.

"Benfica are a team in crisis and there has been a chaotic situation at the club," Svensson said. "They've already burned their chances of winning the league." Benfica are seventh in the 18-strong league.

Redknapp closes on Frenchman

West Ham expect to complete the £400,000 signing of French striker Samussi Abou today after he flew back to London for a medical examination yesterday afternoon.

It will end a three-year trail for their manager, Harry Redknapp, who first spotted Abou, now 24, playing for his country in the Toulon Under-21 tournament.

But the front runner from Cannes is likely to have to wait for his first-team debut as a winger longer than West Ham's next Premiership game at Leicester City on Monday night.

Redknapp said: "Everybody knows we are short of strikers and I've been trying to bring somebody in to thicken up the squad. We've kept our eyes on this lad since I saw him in Toulon a few years ago and our coach, Frank Burrows, went over to France to watch him play well against Auxerre the other week."

Cannes originally put a £1m plus price-tag on Abou, but have finally accepted West Ham's offer after weeks of negotiating which included the player taking part in training with the East London club.

"It is not a lot of money to pay by today's standards and we are hopeful he will be very good value," Redknapp said.

"But he is coming in as a squad player first of all because even with Paul Kitson out injured we've still got John Hart-

son and Iain Dowie up front."

The arrival of Abou is expected to trigger Ian Moore's return to Nottingham Forest after just one substitute appearance on loan to West Ham.

Struggling Huddersfield are trying to sign former Norwich and Welsh international midfielder Jeremy Goss for a nominal fee from Hearts. Goss played a trial for the First Division's basement club yesterday but Huddersfield face competition from Peterborough United for his signature.

Peter Jackson, the Huddersfield manager, hopes to make two signings by the weekend. He also spoke to the Southampton striker, Mickey Evans about a £700,000 move, but he is likely to choose West Bromwich Albion.

Matt Elliott, the Leicester centre-back who has been attracting rave reviews this season, will soon have to decide which country he wants to play for. The London-born 28-year-old has already been talked about as an England possible for the World Cup finals next year and has been sounded out by Scotland because his grandmother was born north of the border.

Today he revealed a third option - Northern Ireland, the country once captained by his club manager, Martin O'Neill. "My grandfather was born in Northern Ireland, so that's another possibility," he said.

Adams quits Swansea after 13 days

After being dumped by Fulham last month, Micky Adams yesterday walked out of the club that appeared to have revived his managerial career.

Adams announced he was quitting Swansea after a mere 13 days in charge following talks with the Welsh club's board. He was reported to be unhappy that funds for new signings had not been made available to halt the club's slide down the Third Division. Despite receiving more than £500,000 in the summer from transfers, Swansea have spent only £160,000 on three new players.

Adams, who took over from the sacked Jan Molby after he had made way at the Thameside club for Kevin Keegan and Ray Wilkins, said: "I'm bitterly disappointed and the worry is that the fans who have supported me wholeheartedly will feel like I've let them down."

"The past month I have not enjoyed. It is unfortunate what has happened and it is with deep regret that I am leaving."

Nicky Summerbee may also be on the move soon, from Manchester City to Bolton, with Jamie Pollock travelling in the opposite direction.

Summerbee, however, is valued at £2m by City, who do not rate the former Middlesbrough player in the same price bracket and will want a cash adjustment of around £500,000. City have also asked about taking a second Bolton player in exchange.

Meanwhile, Bolton are giving a trial to the Bulgarian international Ilian Kirjakov. The midfielder plays for Aberdeen and is available at around £300,000 but will need a work permit, which may prevent the Bulgarian's transfer.

Colin Todd can expect his South African defender Mark Fish to make his return as early as Sunday's match against Chelsea after a knee operation that was expected to keep him out until the New Year.

Channel 5 and RTE are to broadcast live coverage of both legs of the Republic of Ireland's World Cup play-off against Belgium, in Dublin on 29 October and Brussels on 15 November.

— Andrew Martin

Queue to play England

England will decide during the next 48 hours who will be their first opponents since qualifying for the World Cup finals - with Portugal and Colombia believed to be among front-runners for a Wembley date on November 15.

Glenn Hoddle's squad have now acquired such a high reputation, that other World Cup hopefuls are lining up to test their themselves against one of Europe's favourites before next summer's finals in France.

The Football Association confirmed yesterday that 32 teams want to face England on one of the six available friendly international dates between now and the end of next May - and many of them want to come to Wembley in November.

Portugal were at one time thought to be England's first choice with Sweden and Norway possibly in the running. But Colombia, who are one of the South American qualifiers, could be a better bet.

Suggestions that Portugal - who have missed the finals after finishing third in Group 9 - have withdrawn their request to meet England next month were denied by the FA yesterday.

After the November 15 date at Wembley - when eight other European sides, including the Republic of Ireland, will be battling it out in the play-offs - England are not scheduled to be in action again until February 11.

The Republic of Ireland and Wales are believed to be among the countries who want to play England then or on later dates which are available before the finals, namely March 25, April 22, May 23 and May 30.

An FA spokesman, Steve Double, said: "We will announce next month's opposition soon but for the friendly games next year, our opponents won't be decided until after the draw for the World Cup finals."

Sugar spices lecture with talk of dummies, prune juice and inflation

They were wincing at the FA yesterday as they digested Alan Sugar's view of the way the game is run.

The Tottenham chairman chose the Oxford Union as his platform and, as Nick Duxbury reports, he did not hold back.

Attendances are up. England and Scotland are in the World Cup finals, and Alan Shearer has been seen kicking a ball again. Some would say football has never had it so good, but not Alan Sugar, who painted a

dark picture of the country's national sport for the 200 students - some wearing Spurs shirts - gathered in the library of the Oxford Union on Tuesday.

Football, he warned, could be heading towards financial ruin and likened the Football Association to "dummies" who do not know how to govern the game.

"They [the FA] don't have a clue what is going on in the outside world. They're out to lunch. Commercialism has completely taken them over," he said. "Lancaster Gate is like Madame Tussaud's. We tell our people to keep moving so we can tell them apart from the dummies."

The computer millionaire

had asked to address the Union as one of a series of lectures which bring together people who are ahead of the game in their chosen fields. But the talk was almost exclusively football and it was not just the FA who felt Sugar's whip.

Club chairmen were criticised for being greedy and he also attacked the "prune juice effect" of £150m from television pouring into the game at one end and straight out of the other. "The money just ends up in the hands of agents, in inflated transfer fees and in higher players' salaries," he said.

"All Sky's money has done is satisfy the immediate greed of certain clubs. It gives them the means today to fix the im-

mediate problem of how to win a game on the Saturday.

"If we are not careful the game will fall away until we just have Manchester United playing Newcastle on TV every Saturday in different strips."

"Inflation in football is out of control. There will be a big collapse somewhere and nobody will help them out."

Sugar, who had made his first million by the age of 33, faced 90 minutes of questioning during which he agreed that it was not good business to buy Les Ferdinand for £6m and sell Teddy Sheringham for £3.5m.

"Pressure brings irrational moves," he said. "Under normal circumstances we wouldn't be as irrational as that and cer-



Sugar: on the attack

tainly Les Ferdinand would be the first to admit that he was quite astronomically priced."

Sugar ruled out a return to Spurs for Paul Gascoigne. "It's like going back to a place where you had a good time on holiday. It's never the same the second time around."

Games in Shanghai, citing a lack of internationally recognized doping controls. The decision cast a shadow over the remarkable performances in Shanghai, where Chinese women have set world records in weightlifting, swimming and track. "No IWF anti-doping delegate has been present and no IWF-controlled anti-doping testing has been effected," the federation said in a statement.

GOLF

Crenshaw to lead US into next Ryder Cup but not against Seve

Ben Crenshaw, four times a member of the US Ryder Cup team, was yesterday named as captain of the squad when it tries to reclaim the cup in 1999.

Meanwhile, the man who extended Europe's reign in Spain - Seve Ballesteros - underlined his intentions not to lead another defence.

Ben Crenshaw, twice winner of the Masters, will take over the Ryder Cup team that was beaten by Europe at Valderrama in Spain last month and has failed to bring home the trophy in five of its last seven attempts, it was announced yesterday.

The choice of Crenshaw, 45, made sense in that he is a veteran player with Ryder Cup experience and is still active on the American PGA Tour and he will be in a good position to evaluate his players.

Meanwhile, the victorious skipper, Seve Ballesteros, who has been insisting since Valderrama that he will not be European captain again, has cut short all speculation that he might be persuaded to serve again, by confirming his decision in writing.

"I have written to the PGA resigning as the captain and I will not be changing my mind," said Ballesteros from Madrid yesterday, where he is com-

peting in the Oki Pro-Am, which is being staged on the two La Moraleja Golf Club courses this week.

"I hope to be playing well enough to qualify for the team next time. If I don't I might not even watch the next match. I enjoyed the experience as captain this year but once is enough."

While Ballesteros was confirming the end of his tenure as captain of the European team, the appointment of the new US captain was a surprise, in that it was generally assumed after the criticism of Tom Kite for the Valderrama loss that the PGA of America would select a sterner, tougher leader. Crenshaw, a shy historian known as "Gentle Ben", hardly fits that image.

Among those considered were Curtis Strange, who won the 1988 US Open at The Country Club in Brookline, Massachusetts, the venue of the next Ryder Cup, Larry Nelson, twice winner of the USPGA Championship, and Hale Irwin, who has won nine times on the American Senior PGA Tour this year.

Kite was also considered to be in the frame but blamed the loss at Valderrama on lack of course knowledge and admitted he erred in not getting more than three of his team members to play the quirky layout until the week of the Ryder Cup.

Kite was also criticised for trying to play his team a balanced amount instead of going with the strongest match-

ups, as Ballesteros did when he rested the off-form veteran Ian Woosnam.

Whether Crenshaw's team comes up against Ballesteros as a player next time depends very much on whether the Spaniard can pull his game round, starting this week in the unique European Tour pro-am at La Moraleja, in which amateurs play with the professionals for the first two of the four days.

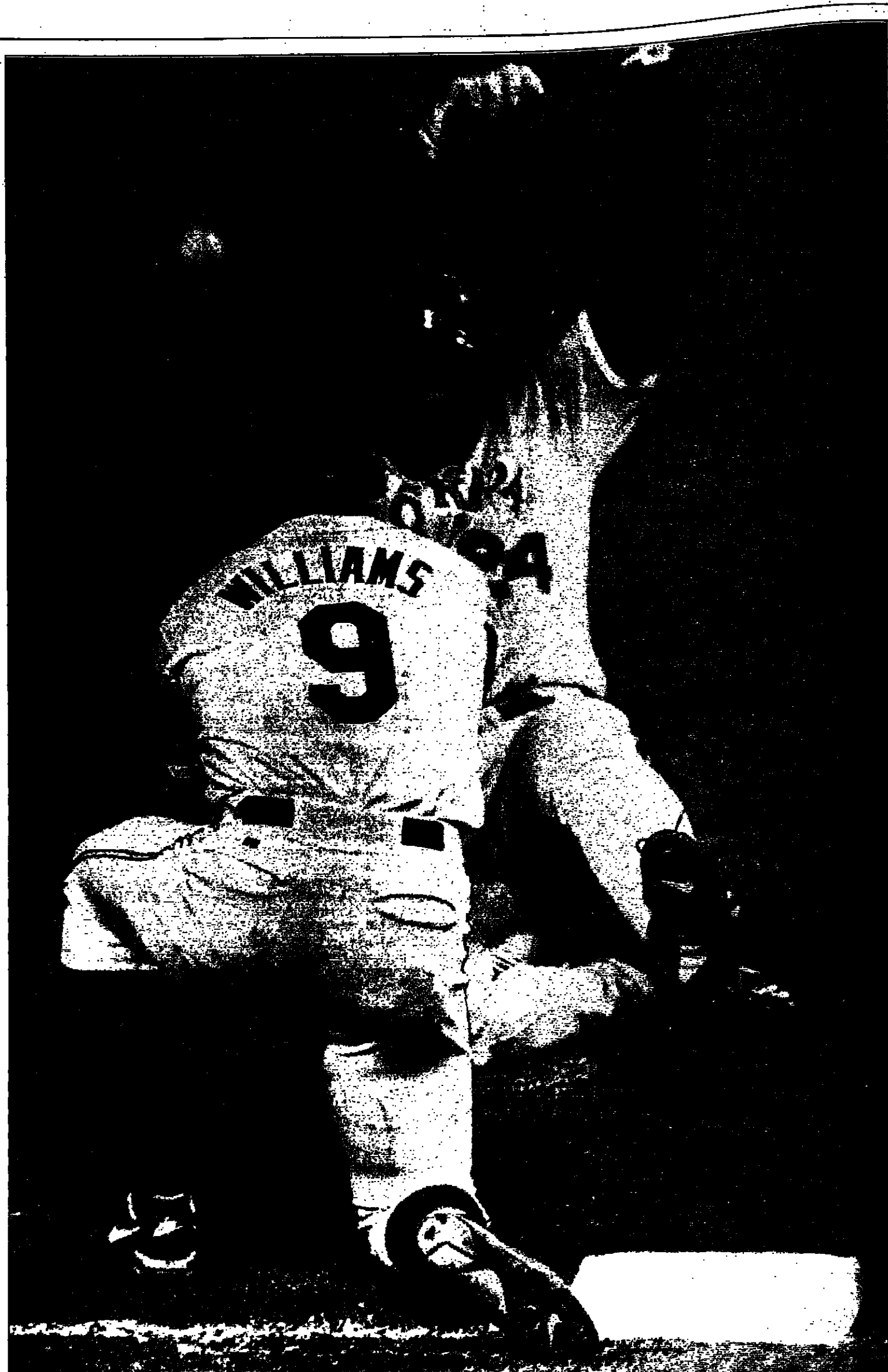
Last year, Ballesteros finished third with a 12-under-par aggregate of 276, three shots behind Tom Kite.

The 40-year-old Spaniard has been trying out a new titanium driver in practice and is optimistic he might do even better than 12 months ago.

His last European Tour victory, incidentally, was in Madrid at the 1995 Spanish Open but on a different course, at the Club de Campo.

His victory chances have been helped by the withdrawal of four of his Ryder Cup team, Darren Clarke, Lee Westwood, Thomas Bjorn and Per-Ulrik Johansson, in the last few days while yesterday Sam Torrance also withdrew after injuring his neck in the pro-am tournament.

Torrance had played 12 holes when he was forced to stop. As he said later: "It would have been crazy to have continued. Now I need to rest the injury because if I do it might be better in a couple of days."



Bobby Bonilla, of the Florida Marlins, safely slides in despite the attentions of Cleveland's Matt Williams in the ninth inning of the third game of baseball's World Series. The game, tied 7-7 at the top of the ninth, ended in a 14-11 win for the Marlins Report, page 31 Photograph: Reuters

BOXING

Wright shows tentative signs of recovery

Carl Wright was yesterday described by doctors as "seriously ill, but improving slowly". The bulletin from the Walton Centre of Neurology and Neurosurgery did not actually confirm that the boxer had regained consciousness, but it is reported that he has come round from his nine-day coma.

John Morris, the Board of Control secretary, said: "We are delighted that Carl Wright is making progress and we are leaving any announcement about his condition to the hos-

pital. They appear to have done an excellent job for Carl and we will rely entirely on what they have to say about him. And, of course, we are hoping he will make a full recovery."

Colin Moorcroft, the trainer who rushed Wright to the Walton hospital after the boxer was taken ill following his fight in Sheffield on 11 Octo-

ber, has said that Wright responded with an emotional reaction after being shown a picture of his three-year-old son, Jordan.

"You can imagine the tension in the room when Carl opened his eyes for the first time in more than a week," said Moorcroft. "I've known Carl since he was nine and have

trained him on and off for the last four years. At least we can be optimistic he may make a full recovery. But we are not kidding ourselves. He is still on a ventilator and extremely ill."

Wright, 28, was outpointed in a fight for the vacant British lightweight title against Antrim's Mark Winters at the Sheffield Arena, and in the ear-

ly hours of the following morning underwent surgery to remove a blood clot from his brain.

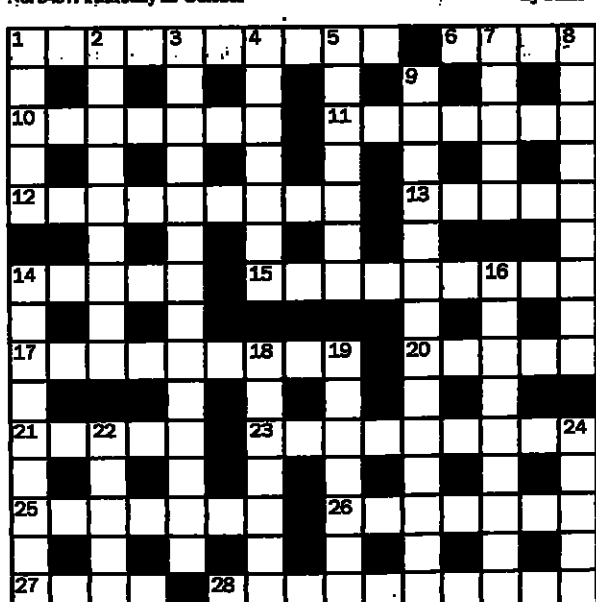
Billy Schwer, the talented but cut-prone fighter from Luton, has sought all kinds of specialist opinion during the last four years to toughen up his features. Now the lightweight will be hoping that one of his latest injury-preventative measures will keep his face in good shape during Saturday's challenge for the European title against Spain's Oscar Garcia Cano in Zaragoza.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3497, Thursday 23 October

By Miss

Wednesday's solution



Across
10 HOUSE OF COMMONS
11 REASON STRIKE
12 RINGER PRINCE
13 LATELY OXLEY
14 STRIDE HAVES
15 SINKER

Down
1 Settled back with very good measures (5)
2 Mellow Goya is gen or faked? (9)
3 Sound painter's fantastic work of art (7)
4 Raise English tax in general (7)
5 Card missing Spade flush (4)
6 Book has virtue and talent (10)
7 Secure church collar (5)
8 Answered, being persuaded (9)
9 Brits involved with a de-canter, becoming dippy (14)
10 Clarifies penalty among reserves (7)

- ACROSS
- Supports president in Review Supplement? (10)
 - See heads rolling (4)
 - Number not in dwelling? Turning extremely so (3,4)
 - NE Scot wants river in landscape (7)
 - Incas? They could be — there's a lack of certainty (9)
 - New poems presenting difficulties (5)
 - Sportsman makes a high hit (5)
 - A short companion (4,5)
 - Warm cover, that is, about the German getting blue (9)
 - Bearded? Came close, but face is shaved (5)

- DOWN
- Seaman streaked, it's said with shocked surprise (3,4)
 - Pool includes Union money (5)
 - Held dear steady during walk (9)
 - Thanks for the receipt (14)
 - Exhibition — with one viewer? (9)
 - Drop a name in a note (9)
 - Old swan on song in fresh surroundings (4,3)
 - Savings, say, boarded by organised gents (4,3)
 - Grass hides bit of info in confusion (5)
 - Becomes gloomy — in a scrape, we hear (5)

Flying high

Tromso vs Chelsea live from 7:50 tonight on (5)